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Chasing Demons: Female Villains and Narrative Strategy in Victorian Sensation Fiction

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Thesis

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Abstract

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Heather Sowards

This thesis explores Victorian sensation fiction and key authors who rely on essentialism, employing the classifications of either angel or demon to their literary female figures. Using Nina Auerbach's theories on these above categorizations and Helene Cixous's linguistic binaries, I examine the ways in which the narrators of Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret*, Sheridan Le Fanu's *Uncle Silas*, and Wilkie Collins's *Heart and Science* force this taxonomy onto the female villains who dominate the novels' themes. By looking closely at the narrative strategies, I conclude that these female characters themselves are proposing a very different sense of self or persona from what the narrator desires us to see. Because of these tensions between narrator and their female villains, I argue that the characters' own dialogue calls into question essential and inherent traits that Victorian authors and critics alike have prescribed for these literary figures. While Braddon employs a narrator who first forces the reader to see an angel and then a demon, and Le Fanu's narrator highlights her own prejudices as well as enforcing a demonic persona onto the female villain, Collins's narrator exaggerates his definitions to such an extent that the villainous woman in his novel takes on a masculine-identified personality and an inhuman aspect, catapulting her out of the angel-demon binary altogether. Therefore, not only do the binaries of angel-demon warrant examination, but also those of human-inhuman and male-female. In addition, I look at the ways in which the authors work their characters back into a rigid and rational binary system, and those authors who might actually create characters and narrators that get out of control, thus perhaps unconsciously constructing a female figure that has intense subversive potential.

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Introduction

After asking for a candle and the exact sleeping quarters of Robert Audley, a young strikingly beautiful woman rushes into a room at the Castle Inn and plunges her head into a water basin, just far enough to completely saturate her golden hair and to abate the feelings of faintness. She then stands in the center of the hotel room looking almost eager and intently at its poor furnishings. While holding a candle tightly within her hands, and thinking of the man, her enemy, supposedly lying in the next room, her attention shifts to the cheap, chintz drapery covering the windows. She smiles as she gazes at the impoverished festoons and furbelows of the room, remembering with a sense of relief the elegant draperies and costly decorations that fill her own chambers. Yet her smile betrays more than mere contentment with her own wealth, for she seems to look to the draperies to emancipate her from her relentless oppressor. With a new intention in mind, she makes her way to the dressing table and looks at her own reflection. Carefully replacing her own bonnet upon her wet head, she sets the candle just close enough to the curtains so that, as the narrator intercedes, the “starched muslin seemed to draw the flame towards it by some power of attraction in its fragile tissue” (319). However, when later asked about whether or not she has extinguished the candle, Lady Audley turns to her servant Phoebe and deceitfully replies, “The wind blew it out as I was leaving your room; I left it there” (319). She then grabs Phoebe’s hand and forces her to begin making the journey back to Audley manor.

As the two women make their way back from the Castle Inn, a bright light inundates the sky behind them. Naturally, Phoebe assumes that her inn is on fire and turns to Lady Audley to confirm her horrible suspicions. With contempt and apathy Lady Audley replies,

I will tell you nothing except that you are a madwoman . . . get
up, fool, idiot, coward . . . Is your husband such a precious bargain

that you should be groveling there, lamenting and groaning for him
. . . . Who is Robert Audley to you, that you behave like a maniac,
because you think that he is in danger? (321).

With these words of overt contempt, we could definitely consider villainous actions, Lady Audley returns quickly and safely to Audley Manor.

While the predominant images in Mary E. Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret* (1862) portray Lady Audley as villainous and deceitful, this scene actually raises many questions concerning how Lady Audley's behavior is narrated. While she routinely expresses her desire to terminate the possibility and threat of Robert Audley's detection, the narrator refuses to narrate her actual acts of villainy (arson and attempted murder), leaving the reader at the mercy of the narrator's insinuations. Moreover, the only less-than-favorable "actions" that we see are Lady Audley's notice of Phoebe's limitations, which marks the intensity of her own desire to prevent herself from sinking to a lower status. Therefore, Lady Audley's moments of staring at the adornments in Phoebe's inn prove only that she recognizes her present social level and its precarious position. To nail down Lady Audley's actual transgressions proves to be a difficult task. Although we can assume that she burns the hotel in an attempt to rid herself of the threat that Robert Audley poses to her sense of newfound stability, the narrator does not allow us to witness the details of the event. As we reread the scene, we may begin to wonder whether the thoughts we might initially credit to Lady Audley are really narrative impositions. In fact, this one scene calls for a rereading of the novel to explore the extent to which the narrator might be constructing and/or persuading the reader to view Lady Audley as villainous. Moreover, exploring Braddon's technique with an intrusive narrator will also help to determine whether tensions exist between Lady Audley's self-presentation and a narrative stance that, for the most part, would have us see a demon.

Although these tensions are for the most part critically ignored, narrative tactics that overtly define the character by speaking directly to the reader have served as the basis for critical

work on sensation fiction for the last several years. For example, Nina Auerbach's work seeks to prove that the angel and demon characteristics are interchangeable. Therefore, for Auerbach the definitions of angel and demon that have conventionally been applied to Victorian women have blurred boundaries. She suggests that these traits are somehow constructed to look inherent and while the angel exemplifies the patriarchal ideal and the demon functions as the angel's nemesis, the angel can easily invoke more power for her limited, but honored position by utilizing the tactics of the demonic woman. This can also work in reverse where the demonic character masks real intentions with the mask of the angel. Potential problems arise with this process of reader classification because Auerbach contends that the angelic and demonic are inherent traits. These conventional classifications and especially Nina Auerbach's categorization of Lady Audley as the exemplary demon woman, who hides an evil persona behind a feminine mask, falls short when we consider that Lady Audley's actions might actually serve as logical responses to her abandonment by her husband. In fact, Lady Audley's only overt transgression might be her ability to role-play what her culture deems is inherent of women. The idea of simultaneously performing these classifications is a possibility that Auerbach overlooks. However, it is the question of what remains, after stripping away the facade of the angelic that still warrants investigation. As Patrick Brantlinger and Nina Auerbach reaffirm, the tradition in dealing with such characters is to stop exploring when we see that the author has constructed a character who fakes the angelic, thus asserting that the intention must be to present her as demonic. And as Brantlinger suggests, the conventional reasoning attributed to Braddon's constructions of characters is to "threaten cherished assumptions about women, marriage, and the fair appearances of the Victorian scene," thus playing upon her "readers' own marital frustrations and disillusionments" (39). Yet, these topics, as Brantlinger argues, which comprise sensation fiction's favorite crimes, "have the advantage of making sexual offence or vice punishable, while validating the institution of marriage in a backhanded way" (34). In other words, traditionally critics have viewed sensational fiction as dealing with themes that put Victorian social decorum and morality at a risk; however,

as Brantlinger states, these “vices” do meet with their deserved consequences. Therefore, while the authors might deal with potentially destructive topics, the novels end in punishing the transgressors, functioning to successfully reassert the stability and necessity of favored Victorian institutions. While I agree with Brantlinger and his argument concerning the punishments for transgressors in the endings of sensational novels, scholars rarely focus on character development, especially female villains. Moreover, at times the female villain of the novel is completely absent from the critical work; thus, critics focus either solely on the male antagonist, or view the female villain as merely secondary to the angel and/or other more hierarchical male villain. In addition to ignoring the implications of the female villain, Brantlinger asserts that “the sensational derives much more from plot than from character . . . circumstances rule characters, propelling them through the intricate machinations of plots that act like fate” (40). While most critics including Brantlinger see the narrator as one who leads the reader through clues, taking on a type of detective role, I would argue that to ignore the female characters themselves is to ignore how they may call into question what plots and narrators would have us see as their ultimate end and punishment. Identifying the tensions between narrator and character, then, might help to highlight not only the subversiveness of villains but the subversiveness of the genre as well.

The polarities of angel-demon that have been so liberally applied to female characters of the Victorian period and especially those of sensation fiction do not account for the characters whose actions and self-presentations do not fit into either category. If a character performs the angelic, can we assume she was intended to appear demonic and nothing more? And if we resist making that assumption, then how do we re-categorize such a female transgressor?

Aside from Lady Audley who clearly performs the angelic, while assigned first angelic and then a supposed inherently demonic persona, Madame Rougierre in Sheridan Le Fanu’s *Uncle Silas* (1864) complicates the conventional polarity because she is assigned a demonic persona, but chooses to perform the demonic at the same time. However, what is specifically relevant about this novel is how Le Fanu uses a biased narrator to construct the reader’s

perceptions of Madame. This narrator who, as a young girl, plays a role in the plot professes angelic qualities for herself; yet, her insistence on Madame's demonic role in her story loses validity as we begin to see the narrator unknowingly highlighting her own failings at reliability. Not only does Madame's character like Lady Audley's character, cause us to question her essentialism because of the obvious performing, but also to look at what subversive qualities, if any, her actions have despite the "angelic" narrator's intrusions and machinations.

Therefore, it seems as though these women's so-called villainy does not stem from their feminine "nature"(passivity, compassion, irrationality or madness), but rather from a possible hybrid status, as yet undefined. If so, how do we define this "other" and what place does this female villain occupy in not only the angel-demon binary, but also in the larger, more all-encompassing binary of male-female. If the female villain's personality cannot be defined as either inherently angelic or demonic, and hence feminine, do these villainous tendencies stem from masculinity? As Helene Cixous contends, the male-female binary operates in a type of contrived hierarchy in which the woman will always occupy the passive, lacking side, while the male dominates the more powerful and logical pole. If a woman transgresses her place, it would only seem logical that she would thus move to her opposition's side, which would be the masculine polarity. However, a woman could never inherently or entirely move to the masculine side because of her biology, which would always be reminiscent of "lack." Cixous's theory proposes a good question for the case of Mrs. Galilee in Wilkie Collins's novel *Heart and Science*, who obviously portrays both masculine and feminine interests, thoughts, and desires. Because Collins's character suggests that she balances between two oppositions, and often clearly performs both maternal compassion and scientific interests, does she then further affirm that her villainy stems from something neither feminine nor even masculine? If the binary of male-female works as a type of hierarchy, is Mrs. Galilee inverting this, or creating a distinctive new place? As the novel progresses, the answer to this question seems to lie in Collins's narrator's insistence on presenting Mrs. Galilee as inhuman. Thus she has gone to an incomprehensible level, one that

supersedes angel-demon and masculine-feminine binaries altogether. Therefore, the woman who transgresses the angel-demon binary and the masculine-feminine binary must then surface in an unthinkable realm. Yet, how do the characteristics of this unthinkable position compare to extant existing socially contrived definitions for femininity, which are also irrational and illogical?

The answers to these questions center on the complex and slippery boundaries between author, narrator, character, and reader. The emergence of intrusive narrators complicates the character construction of Lady Audley, Madame, and Mrs. Galilee. These narrators either insist that these female villains are demonic or inhuman, while the reader may perceive something entirely different. In addition, the other characters might also aid in characterizations of these feminine villains, thus making up many different voices. According to the Russian philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin, several separate and distinctive voices will and *should* surface in a novel. In fact, if they do not then what we have is a pseudo-novel, not a novel in its purest sense. For Bakhtin, dialogue within a narrative represents not only external speech between two characters, but can also function as spoken or unspoken thoughts, as well as internal thoughts, often unwritten, which insinuate a change in the character between “an earlier and later self” (427). This dialogue “undergoes ‘dialogization,’ when it becomes relativized, de-privileged, aware of competing definitions for the same things” (427). In other words, when the speech Bakhtin believes that all language is interconnected, thus there is not one true monologue in a novel and every language is a part of the “dialogism” - a part of a greater whole (426). In fact, there are many dialogues going on simultaneously in a novel between characters, author, narrator, and even common social conventions. As characters or narrators speak, the words they utter become self-conscious, only in that the speaker sees his speech reflected in the “eyes” of the other. Bakhtin terms this understanding of differing and connected language, as “double-voicing.” For example, the author of a particular novel may write out her character’s thoughts, but in these thoughts of the character are combined not only a past and present self, but also the author’s understanding of the character through a novel dialogue that is inescapable. In addition, the narrator’s thoughts,

other character's thoughts and their former speeches or actions, as well as societal impressions all have an influence on a character's dialogue.

Bakhtin's work with different dialogues proves vital in my own examination of these three sensational novels in which many voices appear to construct and assign definitions to femininity. Collectively we not only have the narrators and/or other characters assigning different characteristics to these women, but also have tensions cropping up between what the reader perceives and what the narrator suggests.

Therefore, how as readers do we classify these women who appear to exceed all boundaries and limits? Is it their villainy that allows or enables these women to function from a completely different place outside of logical ordered systems? I will seek to explore whether or not the narrators themselves are aware of the subversive nature of such females and examine to what extent the characters might be uncontrollable for the narrator's. Because of this, do the narrators try to replace or redefine the women in any way in the novel's endings?

I will first examine Braddon's *Lady Audley* and explore to what extent the tensions between narrator and reader work to complicate what we, as readers, believe to be true about her nature. Is she angel or demon, or does she call into question traditional reliance on essentialism. Then I will look at Le Fanu's *Madame Rougierre*, who unlike *Lady Audley* perform not the angelic, but a fiendish demon as well as appropriate governess. I will try to unravel the implications behind her performances and the role that the narrator plays in defining her as essentially demonic. Finally, I will look at Collins's *Mrs. Galilee* and determine to what extent the male-female binary is more applicable. Furthermore, I will look at how in this novel, the reader and narrator diverge more obviously. How do these differing opinions concerning *Mrs. Galilee*'s character affect our understanding of her place in the binary? Is she even in the binary at all any longer, or has she exited all confines completely?

Chapter 1

Angel or Demon?: Lady Audley's Destruction of Binaries and Essentialism

In *Woman and the Demon*, Nina Auerbach proposes that constructions of masculine metaphorical angels enabled them to have limitless movement and mobility. Conventionally, biblical mythology attributed them power to move, swoop, and actually intervene with mortals' lives quite easily. However, as Auerbach argues, the myths concerning angels have changed drastically since their ancient conception. Angels began to take on more of a feminine quality as early as the fifteenth century, ultimately surfacing more commonly as a social metaphor for women in Victorian literature. On the face of it, this domestic ideology appeared to stem from the woman's honored and respected place in the home. However, in the end, the metaphor of angel actually restricted, confined, and bound women to an inescapable subservient role. It was not until Coventry Patmore's poem¹ that this definition took hold and solidified the classification of married women and morally sound maidens as angelic figures. This category exemplified what the male order saw as a natural persona for women. The angel's domain existed solely in the home, caring for children and the hearth. Unlike her biblical namesakes, she had no power that existed outside of the house. This metaphor renamed the women who assumedly exhibited the male ideal, thus measuring the woman's worth according to morality and domestic abilities. Although the upper and middle class Victorian woman's domain was entirely domestic, she did not, in fact, have ultimate power over the home. That privilege rested with the husband who, by law, functioned as the patriarchal head of the household.

¹ Coventry Patmore wrote "Angel in the House" for his wife Emily. The collection was originally published in 1854 and later revised in 1862. Originally targeted and hopefully exemplary of middle class marriages, lines such as: "At any time, she's still his wife/ Dearly devoted to his arms/ She loves with love that cannot tire" assumedly defined the perfected wife. Borrowing biblical terminology, Patmore appropriated the term "angel" to define this wife whose whole existence centered on service to her husband and children. An angelic wife not only supposedly strengthened the relationship itself, but also secured the entire family's reputation. Although its conception was to maintain the middle-class status through the wife's devotion, morality, and service, the angel metaphor reached the royal class as well. Upon marrying Prince Albert, Queen Victoria also exhibited domestication, thus further appropriating and extending the metaphor to later define the women of the 19th century.

As “angels in the house,” therefore, Victorian women suffered from limitations and immobility due to a confining patriarchal system. “In contrast to her swooping ancestors,” Auerbach writes, “the angel in the house is a violent paradox” (72). Although this reconstituted Victorian women, the angel obviously lived a limited and controlled life, the honor implied by the appellation worked to safeguard patriarchy’s power. As Auerbach agrees, the Victorian woman inside and outside of literature is the “source of order” (72). Although not explicitly defined by Auerbach, this “order” is male-centered in which women are squelched and bound. Ironically, the patriarchal order bases its power on the assumption that women are naturally weaker and submissive, all the while masking its own internal chaos which surfaces when these classifications fall short. In short, the patriarchal structure, in order to sustain power, must delegate confining personas to all women. The angel in literature, thus, becomes the easily oppressed, marriageable, and motherly character, one who receives honor due to her necessity, consistency, and place in the home, but who also drives and helps, by her very submission, the resilience of patriarchy.

Since males often construct this definition of the feminine, it would seem only natural that women in reality and in literature might contradict this generalization. Because of these possible and quite inevitable inconsistencies, Victorian literature often explores the woman who does not appear as angelic. Victorian writers characterize this “other” polarity as the demonic woman, one who assumedly transgresses behavioral codes that patriarchy establishes for the angel. Conventionally, this woman often appears in literature as the antagonist, the woman who poses the greatest threat to the heroine/angel’s physical wellbeing. The female “demon” thus functions in many different ways, often as a maddened fiend, syren, or villain. In fact, in most cases the villainous woman is often synonymous with the definition of “demon” or “devil.” Because order must be restored, this character usually dies or is incarcerated as a consequence of her transgression. However, the nature of the “demonic” woman’s transgressions and the angelic

woman's behavior appears, at times, indistinguishable, suggesting that the angel definition does not allow for deviant behavior.

What makes Auerbach's study of the angel/ demon dichotomy so interesting is that she argues that the angelic character often appears to cross over to the demon side of the binary. This move occurs when the angel *performs* those traits traditionally associated with the demonic. While the purpose of each angel figure's demonic play -acting certainly differs, Auerbach does not use these distinctions to question the essence of the angel. For Auerbach, the angel-demon uses her performance simply to gain power not formally found in the limited angel role. This can also work in the reverse, when the demon, adopting an angelic guise, inconspicuously enacts the angelic traits. Furthering this point, Auerbach suggests that characteristics "implicit in the angel actually come to the foreground in the demon" (77). Here, Auerbach links the angel and demon together from the beginning, arguing that the essential angel has the inherent disposition to transgress. In the demon, however, these characteristics are more apparent and thereby come to the surface. Yet, while hastily suggesting that the angel and demon can interchange roles quite easily, Auerbach overlooks her own fissure that she opens up in the angel-demon binary, which demand essentialism to make sense.

Because Auerbach grounds most of her discussion in the religious implications of the angel and demon, she finds the two gaining powers because they displace their biblical masculine ancestors. In fact, Auerbach sees the literary manifestations of angel and demon breaking down former Catholic and Anglican definitions. Both angel and demon, therefore, call for what Auerbach deems "a larger literary myth of womanhood, one that supersedes traditional ideas of divinity" (85). Auerbach assigns to these women a type of supernatural power, a power males recognize on the literary scene and somewhat fear. The angels and the demon's unexplicable and "supernatural" power seem to lie within their ability to enact personas that are equally interchangeable.

Auerbach associates this aforementioned type of powerful angel-demon with Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret*. Auerbach begins by outlining Lady Audley's intoxicating angelic behavior to highlight her effect on male observers. She then suggests that "Braddon employs with scholarly precision angelic iconography for demonic purposes"(107). She argues that Braddon's intention here is to paint a picture of angelic qualities only to showcase the demonic underneath. Auerbach utilizes Braddon's own phrase "so like and so unlike" to define Lady Audley's existence as representing the blurring of angel into demon. Linking her with mythical mermaids and sirens, Auerbach proposes that Lady Audley's demonic nature surfaces only with a slight "shift of the viewer's perspective"(108). Lady Audley and her fellow demonic counterparts become "sacred objects rather than human beings, they assault the sources of power, sexual, social, and divine"(108). For Auerbach, this assault and consequent power results from Lady Audley's knowledge of her limited social status, which, according to Auerbach, she uses her demonic traits to overcome.

Although Auerbach herself indicates that critics have "liberally" designated Lady Audley as demonic, she too appears to readily accept this classification of Lady Audley. She sees Lady Audley's strategic performance of the angelic as an authorial technique that blurs demon and angel. Auerbach, however, overlooks what it means to perform. Although Auerbach does account for Lady Audley's knowledge of her gender's limited roles, she sees her retaliating by utilizing her own underlying demonic persona, while under the guise of the angelic. However, Lady Audley embraces the angelic role and repeatedly strives to maintain the appearance of innocence. The very innocence and passiveness routinely assigned to women might actually deter Lady Audley's oppressors from implicating her in a certain crime. Lady Audley thus exploits the very characteristics that have traditionally helped the patriarchal system to define and confine women. In fact, it seems as though Lady Audley's goal is maintain the protected status of the angel. Auerbach skirts these social implications, focusing more on Lady Audley's reworking of divine symbolism and her exhibition of so-called demonic tendencies. In Auerbach's view, Lady

Audley's obvious role-playing undermines her angelic appearance, justifying critical assessments of her essence as demonic. If Lady Audley can strategically enact a role that is already socially considered a part of her essential makeup, then she exists on a different level, one definitely not angelic.

While we might be tempted to define Lady Audley as essentially demonic, this characterization becomes suspect when we consider that critics rate her as demonic only because she *plays* the angel role. Relying heavily on the fallacious either/or categorization of women, Auerbach and others too hastily suggest that Lady Audley's essential nature surfaces on one of two sides of the pole. That is to say, role play on one side of the binary does not rule out the possibility of role-play on the other side as well. Furthermore, Auerbach names Lady Audley an angel-demon; however, in order for this classification to make sense within Auerbach's own theory, Lady Audley would have to resonate as having essential angelic traits and then transgress by utilizing the demonic traits, which she clearly does not do. In fact, Lady Audley enacts almost an opposing pattern. The demonic traits that surface throughout the novel do not give her a sense of power over her oppressors; rather, the angelic traits do. Lady Audley's successes in using an angelic persona to dupe men, who could quickly become her enemy, complicate Auerbach's theory. Because Auerbach suggests that the demonic traits function as the access to power and Lady Audley clearly uses the angelic, her analysis falls short.

Consequently, Auerbach overlooks the significance of this most infamous of sensational characters who not only problematizes the boundaries between angel and demon, but also creates a new sense of place that is neither angelic nor demonic. Lady Audley suggests that there exists a sphere conventionally undefined. If she not only role-plays the assumed inherent angel, but also gains power through its qualities instead of needing the demonic, then she clearly transgresses these former classifications.

While Auerbach might hastily characterize Lady Audley as an angel-demon, she also fails to account for the narrator's role in Lady Audley's characterization. Braddon's narrator

begins by characterizing Lady Audley as the epitome of an angel, going to great lengths to introduce Lady Audley to the reader as an angelic woman whose beauty, passivity, and innocence make her the desired object of all the men that come into contact with her. During this characterization, however, Lady Audley's own voice and dialogue with other characters paints a completely different image of herself than the narrator would have us see. Yet, while Lady Audley herself appears to resist the narrator's characterization, in a later section she begins to self-consciously perform the angelic hyperfeminine persona the narrator represented earlier in the novel. Then, in an even more intriguing shift, the narrator begins to narrate Lady Audley as demonic, instead of the angel she presented earlier. In order to further explore the problems inherent in characterizing Lady Audley as either Auerbach's angel or demon, I will examine below both how and why Braddon's narrator molds Lady Audley's character first into an angel and then into a demon.

The Narrator's Angel

Lady Audley exists throughout Braddon's novel *Lady Audley's Secret* as a paradoxical figure. As readers, we cannot overlook the narrator's intentions in establishing Lady Audley as an angel. Braddon's narrator introduces Lady Audley through the eyes of other characters who clearly see her as angelic. From the very beginning, the narrator shows Sir Michael, Lady Audley's future husband, reacting to what he sees as the epitome of womanhood. The narrator writes, "[Michael] could no more resist the tender fascination of those soft and melting blue eyes; the graceful beauty of that slender throat and drooping head, with its wealth of showering flaxen curls; the low music of that gentle voice . . . than he could resist his own destiny" (12). Here, Braddon illustrates the intensity of Lady Audley's magical charms and their effects on Sir Michael. At this point in the novel, we know nothing of what Lucy will later attempt to do, so these descriptions seem unadulterated. We accept Lady Audley as the angelic heroine immediately. Lucy Graham obviously has an immense amount of power over Sir Michael, which spurs his marriage proposal. This authoritative charm does not seem to function yet as the

demonic charm of a mythical mermaid or syren who lures men with her beauty and then ultimately destroys them. In fact, the descriptions show that, although Sir Michael may be completely enamoured with *her* physicality, Lady Audley's head droops, she does not speak until provoked, and she exhibits an overall lack of feeling for *him*. Here, it seems as though even the "angel" category is misleading. The angel should, of course, be endowed with honesty, but for her to function as the honorable source of male power she would have to give into Sir Michael with loving compassion. The true Victorian angel would forsake her own happiness to accept the hand of the more deserving man. She would not recognize her own desires or needs to escape poverty, but would comply based merely upon Sir Michael's attributes, which would fulfill her role of selfless caregiver. While her appearance and effect on Sir Michael deem her an angel, in his view Lucy's speech reveals a need to express her own faults. Here, Lucy's honesty, expected of an angel, highlights the internal contradictions and inherent instability of the patriarchal idea of feminine order and the angelic. In her demonstration of absolute honesty, what she says actually sets her apart from the angel role:

Love you! Why there are women a hundred times my superiors in
beauty and in goodness who might love you dearly; but you ask
too much of me Remember what my life has been; only remember
that. I cannot be disinterested; I cannot be blind to the advantages of
such an alliance. (16)

What Lucy says here to Sir Michael contradicts the image of Lucy that Braddon narrates. Here is a woman who might look angelic but vocally exposes how she does not fit into this categorization. Lucy pleads with Sir Michael to understand her personality. She begins by comparing herself to other women who might fit the angel role. By doing so, she attempts to show Sir Michael that she does not mirror his assumptions. Lucy clearly wants him to understand that, although she might admire and respect his love, he cannot ask her to lie about her own feelings. The last sentences of this speech are the most poignant because the reader sees Lucy's

knowledge of her own selfishness. Such a quality conflicts with the construction of the Victorian angelic, but does not necessarily suggest an inherent demonic nature. She seems more practical here, even human, as she tells Sir Michael that she cannot ignore that a marriage with him would offer her the wealth and status she has always craved and never known. It is this admission and knowledge of her shortcomings that should have prepared Sir Michael for his marriage with such a woman. Lucy clearly admits to her failings as an angelic figure before agreeing to marry him. Although Sir Michael may reveal disappointment, he cannot feign ignorance of Lucy's inability to be the selfless, loving wife he desires.

In spite of the fact that Lucy strives to reveal self-proscribed flaws to Sir Michael, other characters' subsequent characterizations of Lucy suggest that she is angelic as well. Robert Audley's continuous references to her as the "paragon" of womanhood, even before he meets her, are founded upon what he hears of her reputation as innocent, beautiful, and childlike. It is interesting to note that these descriptions and defining comments never come from Lucy herself, but are seen only through narrative commentary or other characters' impressions. Robert Audley's first impression of his aunt furthers this unwarranted portrayal: "She's the prettiest little creature you ever saw in your life . . . such blue eyes, such ringlets, such a ravishing smile, such a fairy like bonnet-- all a tremble with heartsease and dewy spangles, shining out of a cloud of gauze . . . I feel like the hero of a French novel"(59). Here, Robert places expectations upon her character that seems overzealous, considering he met her only briefly in a carriage. Her physical attractiveness, childlike features, and gentility automatically seem to detract from her power as a villain but ironically give her a startling amount of power over the men around her because she seems to fulfill their ideal. Her "ravishing smile" and "fairy-like bonnet" expounds upon Robert's overly romanticized remarks of "heartsease, and dewy spangles coming out of clouds." Robert Audley's choices of lines from a French novel hint at his own effeminate nature and the traditional plot lines that place women in highly sexualized and objectified positions. However, such notions do expose the insistence of men to possibly ignore real traits and to focus on Lucy as

the epitome of the angel, or in other words, the domesticated woman. Lucy's consistent kindness and beauty, which most likely stem from her new wealth, serve as the only justification that Robert Audley and other men need in order to place her in such a position. Likewise, her position as Sir Michael's wife supports this categorization. Their relationship and marriage provides outsiders with an example how the societal structure should work: the childlike, innocent bride marries the much older, established man who offers her security, status, and a home in which she is doted upon. Lucy, therefore, becomes this idyllic woman whose purpose in life is measured by how well she fulfills the "male-defined" womanly role.

In addition to explicitly narrating the male point of view, the narrator makes a special point of juxtaposing Lucy with other female characters in order to highlight her innocence and to support assumptions of Lucy's childlike nature. Alicia Audley's own characterizations of Lucy imply her jealousy and resentfulness: "Papa is perfectly absurd about his new wife, and she and I cannot get on together at all; not that she is disagreeable to me, for, as far, as that goes, she makes herself agreeable to everyone; but she is so irretrievably childish and silly" (51). The definition of Lady Audley as immature seems to correlate with other depictions of her, also differing from the honest woman who openly admits her faults to Sir Michael. Sir Michael's "absurdity" concerning his new wife causes Alicia to recognize the obsessive nature of men when faced with what they see as ideal. The narrator's insistence on portraying Alicia's resentment establishes a hierarchy between the two women. At this point, the narrator wants to evoke sympathy for Lucy and characterize Alicia as the "dark," outspoken counterpart who departs from the ideal. For the first time, Lucy has the wealth to procure what she wants paired with an attitude and demeanor that she warned Sir Michael about prior to their marriage. She merely reacts to the money in the way that she prophesied. Alicia's mention of Lucy's "agreeable" nature serves as the most important portion of the letter. Although Alicia may harbor some type of jealousy toward her new stepmother, she cannot say that Lucy's behavior has been anything but conventional. It is also important to mention that Braddon's choice of Robert Audley as the recipient of this letter

further distinguishes how men view Lucy from how women see her. Alicia's comments concerning her father's bride never affect Robert's own feelings about her. For the most part, he translates these qualities of childishness and silly behavior into an ideal example of womanhood. Since these traits coincide with delicate innocence, the more childish Lucy appears in the beginning, the more Robert Audley falls in love with and admires his aunt.

This narrative technique helps Braddon to construct, at least in the beginning, different examples of womanhood, while safeguarding the superiority of the angelic. For example, as a carefully orchestrated antithesis, Alicia is described as "pretty, gipsy-faced, lighthearted and hoydenish"(36). The startling difference between the dark woman and the fair-haired hyperfeminine persona is immediately apparent. Here, Braddon employs a traditional sensational tactic. She is carefully posing two women together who must stand as opposites, in order for the angel to remain as the ideal. Braddon's placement of Alicia's dark features and headstrong personality beside her characterizations of Lucy's golden hair and docility is reminiscent of the traditional literary battle for the most suitable and acceptable mate. Likewise, Robert Audley finds himself enamoured with what he sees as the manifestation of the ideal instead of with his strong willed cousin, Alicia. Traditionally, the angelic or idyllic woman has won over her darker, more mysterious opposite. The only difference here is that Braddon experiments with the idea of a woman who is not herself angelic, but is consistently described and defined in this way according to what others want and must see in her. Because Lucy Audley follows a tradition of the fair-haired, innocent angel who quietly submits, at this point in the novel her position as the angel seems secure.

In an intriguing counterplot, Braddon uses Lucy's maid, Phoebe, as an agent of her greedy fiancée in order to set Lucy above all other women. This tactic initiates not only pity and worry for the ideal, but nods toward a type of "good versus evil" battle in which Lady Audley appears as the protagonist. Therefore, Phoebe also serves as an example of femaleness that falls

short of our idealized heroine. Braddon's first descriptions of Phoebe come close to those of Lucy:

She might have been pretty, I think, but for the one fault in her small oval face. This fault was an absence of colour. Not one tinge of crimson flushed the waxen whiteness of her cheeks; not one shadow of brown redeemed the pale insipidity of her eyebrows and eyelashes; not one glimmer of gold or auburn relieved the dull flaxen hair. (29)

Here, the reader sees Phoebe as a duller copy of the ideal. Phoebe's poverty functions as the most interesting comparison between the two women. Lucy, too, was poverty-stricken before her marriage to Sir Michael. The two women, once complete equals, now function in a strange and contrived hierarchy. Braddon utilizes Phoebe's character to not only show the leap from poverty to wealth, but also to fully highlight Lucy's newfound status, which the reader sees as a deserved reward for such an innocent, feminine nature. The reader rallies behind the conventional heroine and chastises those characters who would threaten such an ideal.

Shifting Personas: Performing the Angelic, Described as a Demon

As the narrative continues, however, a crucial change takes place in which the narrator begins to disavow the earlier angelic presentation of Lucy, while Lucy herself begins to claim it as her own for the first time. The importance of this shift is not only in Lucy's inability to fit into Auerbach's neat categories, but also that Lucy first refuses to present herself as an angel when the narrator clearly depicts her in this way. Then, just when she determines to embrace this role, the former tension is doubly complicated when the narrator herself shifts and begins to characterize Lucy as a demonic character. This shift in Lady Audley's dialogue and the narrator's own descriptions work together to challenge Auerbach's categorization of Lady Audley, as either the inherent "angel" or "demon." Lucy's shifting demeanors and obvious performance break down any type of clear-cut taxonomy, shedding light on how inept essential classifications of women seem to be.

Only from the perspective of the end of the novel can we determine at what point Lady Audley's constructed angelic persona is first threatened, which later motivates a string of villainous actions also carefully constructed and hidden behind the mask of an angel. It is during that first meeting between Robert Audley and Lucy Audley, while she is in the carriage, that she first hears the mention of George Talboys's name. Braddon has already carefully established her appearance and charm, and even makes a point of mentioning her power over Sir Michael: "Now so complete was the dominion which Lady Audley had, in her own childish, unthinking way . . . it needed but the faintest elevation of Lucy's brow with a charming expression of weariness and terror, to make her husband aware that she did not want to be bored" (58). As we reread this passage it is apparent that Lucy Audley knew exactly who and what she was avoiding. This is the first point that we see utilizing the femininity her husband and others would expect. Even her expression of terror and worry at the sound of her former husband's name does not undermine the way that Sir Michael reads her face as "charming." Here Lucy realizes the strength of her own power in avoiding detection. At this point, Lucy fully understands her position, what she stands to lose, and how she will go about protecting herself not only from her old lifestyle, but from the fate of a woman who marries one man while still legally bound to another.

It is also important to point out the narrator's involvement or intrusion during Lady Audley's so-called demonic or villainous acts. For example, in the scene immediately following George's disappearance, Robert pays a visit to Audley Court and discusses his assumptions concerning the case. The first explanation we receive is Braddon's narration of Lady Audley's "rustling of her silk flounces and a mock curtsy" as she greets her nephew (87). This description is, of course, very girlish and after understanding what has really taken place prior to this visit, the reader finds Lady Audley heartless, cruel, and possibly villainous. What Lady Audley actually voices to Robert Audley is not necessarily so girlish, but rather a subtler, more carefully constructed enactment of her role: "Thank you so much for the sables . . . how good it was of you to get them for me" (87). We can easily recognize Lady Audley's intentions to remain pleasant to

Robert because of his involvement with George. By appearing as if a mysterious disappearance is secondary to her childish delight with expensive presents, she diverts attention away from her nervousness and her desperate need to change the subject. Even the narrator interrupts this speech with the descriptions of her “little fingers, all glittering and twinkling with diamonds”(87). This is a conscious intrusion, which emphasizes Lady Audley’s love for her wealth and focuses on perhaps more selfish, self-serving attributes. When Lucy actually voices an opinion on George’s case, however, she does so with a perfected sense of innocence. She carefully hides any suspicious behavior or guilt by feigning a lack of understanding of men and their affinities for the ideal:

Dear me! She said, this is very strange. I did not think men were capable of these deep and lasting affections. I thought that one pretty face was as good as another pretty face to them, and that when number one with blue eyes and fair hair died, they had only to look out for number two with black eyes and hair, by way of variety. (88)

By belittling the strength or genuineness of George’s love, she avoids any connection to him, but also cunningly implies her rightful feelings of abandonment. Moreover, she not only speaks in veiled terms of her relationship with George, but also acknowledges the cultural cache of a pretty face.

While Lady Audley continues to exploit the security that the “feminine” affords her, the narrator intervenes with her own cross purpose of showcasing Lucy as a villain. Lucy dismisses any discussion of George’s possible death by saying, “Upon my word . . . you make me quite uncomfortable by the way in which you talk of Mr. Talboys . . . one would think that something extraordinary had happened to him” (90). By performing feminine “discomfort” with distasteful matter, she diverts the attention away from her role in his disappearance. Lucy knows that faintness marks her as feminine; yet, even as she roleplays fear and aversion to such unsuitable topics, the narrator reexamines Lucy’s hands and drops a hint of her former angelic capacity for

the demonic. “[Robert] looked at her pretty fingers one by one;” the narrator writes, “this one glittering with a ruby heart; that one encoiled by an emerald serpent; and about them all a starry glitter of diamonds” (90). Lucy has just successfully turned the attention away from her own involvement in George’s disappearance, but the narrator forces us to view the angel’s demise once again. Now in addition to her diamonds, a serpent coils itself conveniently on her hand between the heart-shaped ruby and other rings. This serpent shifts the reader’s attention from Lucy’s self-presentation to the representation of Lady Audley as a fallen angel. Thus, we reread her feminine adornments as a reminder that the feminine is intrinsically susceptible to a fall from grace. With these descriptions, the narrator likens Lady Audley to a type of Eve, who will ultimately destroy herself and bring disgrace to her male counterpart. It seems Braddon wants the reader to see that the angelic, even in Eden, expresses the potential for deviation from that ideal.

While Lucy continues to express herself in an effeminate but direct way, the narrator continues to narrate her as maddened, desperate, and almost inhuman. Much later in the story, when Lady Audley pays Robert Audley a surprise visit at the Castle Inn, she offers her own explanation for the visit, while the narrator focuses on her cold and heartless nature. Before we even hear Lady Audley’s explanation, the narrator suggests, “Lady Audley was radiant on this cold morning . . . other people’s noses are rudely assailed by the sharp fingers of the grim ice-king, but not my lady’s; other people’s lips turn pale and blue . . . but my lady’s pretty little rosebud of a mouth retained its brightest coloring” (141). Here, it may appear that Braddon still characterizes Lucy as the angelic, submissive woman, but upon a closer look, this description likens Lucy to more of an inexplicable supernatural power. Lucy’s “radiance” on the morning of such a visit to her enemy implies not only her unusual confidence, but also a type of demeanor unnatural to one who is quickly approaching detection. Because of her own “cold” nature, even the “fingers of the ice-king” cannot touch her.

As their conversation continues, Lady Audley attempts to make the appropriate social apology for Robert’s dismissal from Audley Court. While we know Lucy’s influence over her

husband forces Robert to leave, Lady Audley acts as if it were her “silly husband trying to protect his poor little wife” (141). The reiteration of the phrase, “poor little wife” aids Lady Audley in her role playing of the innocent. Never missing an opportunity to feign conventional femininity, Lucy reprimands Robert Audley for “speaking in enigmas” and warns that if he continues to do so he must “forgive a poor little woman, if she declines to answer them”(142). With these comments, Lucy looks quite angelic, but the repetition of the phrase “poor little” reveals a woman who clearly understands her societal position and limits. Her insistence on calling herself the poor little wife has many meanings here. She never says to Robert Audley that she does not *understand* his metaphors or enigmatic way of speaking, but that she simply refuses to answer him. While Lucy hints at a complete understanding of her actions and what she must do to protect herself, the narrator intercedes with descriptions of Lucy’s facial contortions from beautiful angel to a type of maddened fiend: “A sudden change came over Lady Audley’s face; the pretty roseate flush faded out from her cheeks, and left them waxen white, and angry flashes lightened in her blue eyes”(142). The features that have for so long characterized this angel fade away and leave behind eyes that flash pure and unhidden anger at their attacker. Despite the narrator’s insistence that Lucy has the ability to lash out, what Lucy actually says is not so angry or maddened, but more of an honest and suitable questioning of intentions. Careful not to destroy her image, Lucy asks Robert, “what have I done to you, that you should hate me so?”(142). With this plea, Lady Audley affirms Robert’s knowledge of her identity. Her question, however, contradicts the image of the villainous, erratic woman the narrator would now have us see, and instead reveals a desperate woman trying to comprehend Robert’s intentions.

Robert’s obsession with finding George begins to appear secondary to his intent to expose Lady Audley’s angelic mask. By refocusing his attention on the fraudulence of the angel, he not only reestablishes himself as the pseudo-hero of the novel, but also further highlights the inevitable plight and destruction of the villain. Like all conventional villains, Lady Audley must reap the consequences of her deviant actions.

Villain or Not?

If asked to cite an example of Lucy Audley's villainy, we most likely will not find a ready answer. Throughout the novel, Braddon first represents Lady Audley as an angelic figure and then works to completely destroy that image as she thrusts her heroine into villainy. Yet the narrator never explicitly details the major event that ultimately casts Lucy in this new role. We only fully understand the details of the situation much later, when Lucy has already confessed and deems herself a product of inherited madness. Of course, the tactic of later revealing Lucy's madness might first seem like an attempt to maintain the novel's sole mystery--that is, Lady Audley's "secret"--but as the narrator continuously equates Lucy with a villain, it seems as though she wants us to intuit Lucy's involvement in the case. Although we believe that Lady Audley did, in fact, commit these acts even before she admits to them, Braddon purposefully refuses to narrate directly the emergence of Lucy's demonic traits or overt villainous actions. Specifically, the narrator writes as if about to highlight a villainous act, but never actually explicitly details the event. This abbreviation of Lucy's deviant acts indicates that Lucy's villainy represents more than just the angel figure's ultimate fall. It also shows that perhaps the narrator not only is unreliable, but exaggerates the implication of such actions and then understates the event for a reason.

We do enjoy just one tangible glimpse of Lucy as potential villain when she attempts to neutralize Robert Audley by setting fire to the Castle Inn. Even so, the narrator's descriptions of this actual act leave readers without a clear sense of what Lucy actually does in this scene. Through the narrator's characterization of Lucy's thoughts, we do get more of an unobstructed view of her selfish nature and possible intentions to burn the curtains, but these details merely reaffirm the tensions present between narrator and character. Leading up to this event, the narrator shows Lady Audley as an opponent in a very serious game, in which Robert Audley is pushed to the forefront and favored to win. For example, on her way to the Inn on that day, the

narrator uses an interesting comparison between the biblical Lot's wife and Lucy, which further aids in her attempts to reverse the reader's perception of Lucy:

She stopped in her rapid pacing to and fro, stopped as Lot's wife might have stopped, after that fatal backward glance at the perishing city, with every pulse slackening, with every drop of blood congealing in her veins, in the terrible process that was to transform her from a woman into a statue. (306)

The link between this fatal glance backward toward Sodom and Gomorrah and Lucy's glance toward her wealthy establishment not only intensifies our understanding of her selfishness, but also sets up her defiance of a type of moral order. Lucy will become the "statue woman," one that exists without the normal feminine attributes of compassion. Again, the narrator renders Lucy nearly inhuman. However, Lucy's own voice suggests her evolving and very human fear of her opponent and consequent exasperation at what to do: "I can't plot horrible things . . . my brain isn't strong enough, or I'm not wicked enough or brave enough" (295). Here, Lucy recognizes her own failures and actually distinguishes herself from the demonic. These feelings of self-evaluation are accompanied by previous laments to Phoebe that Robert Audley "pushes" her and will not stop until he destroys her. Although Lady Audley admits that she could "kill Robert Audley if he were standing in front of her," it is merely an outburst of fear and the realization of her inevitable ruin. After Lucy decides to go to the Castle Inn to confront Robert Audley, the narrator attempts to reveal the villainous woman by depicting Lucy's heartless sneering at Phoebe's poverty and her thoughts of her own wealth. The narrator suggests "she had reason, perhaps to smile, remembering the costly elegance of her own apartments" (319). The woman we watch, however, is an obviously upset, angered, and emotional Lucy who plunges her head into a water basin and then places a candle too close to a set of lace curtains. Of course, we cannot say that she did not commit the act purposefully, or that her intentions were not to destroy Robert Audley. But the fact that the narrator depicts her only *placing* the candle beside the curtains resonates as key. This action suggests that if the curtains do catch fire, as they surely will and do,

Lucy intended such an effect, but her actions were not direct. We do not see a maddened fiend setting fire to curtains, but a woman who feels, as a last resort, she must cause an “accident” to happen. In short, the narrator partially conceals the actual act and intention from us, which calls into question the author’s earlier representation of Lady Audley as the maddened and possibly demonic woman.

Likewise, the reader is not offered a full explanation of the event which spurs Robert Audley’s pursuit of Lucy until much later, when Braddon’s character has incriminated herself by confessing her own madness. The first hint of Lucy’s involvement with George Talboys’ disappearance or possible murder occurs when Robert Audley first notices the bruises on his aunt’s wrist. Lady Audley plays off the detection with supreme innocence: “I am rather absent in mind, and amused myself a few days ago by tying a ribbon around my arm so tightly that it left a bruise when I removed it”(91). This remark resituates Lucy’s angelic femininity, even while the narrator continues to implicate her in devilish acts. The description of the bruise, as “the mark of four fingers of a powerful hand that had grasped the delicate wrist a shade too roughly,” suggest that a possible struggle ensued in which Lucy Audley merely retaliated in order to protect herself (91). However, the focus here is on Lucy’s *lie* and *not* on what George might have done to Lady Audley during their reunion. The narrator does not describe the incident as it is happening, but rather waits until Lucy is already perceived as mad by virtue of her own confession so that her version of the tale will only incriminate her further. Only then does Lucy fully reveal her animosity. Because George threatens to reveal her deceit to Sir Michael, Lucy describes their meeting as tense and strained, hinging on her own rage: “He told me that no power on earth should turn him from his purpose, which was to take me to the man I had deceived, and make me tell my wicked story”(386). George’s plan prompts Lucy to declare that she will call him “mad” and denounce him to her husband. Lucy describes George grabbing her and refusing to let her leave. This one action, according to Lucy, elicits her own “mad” nature and forces her to grab the loose iron spindle from where George sits, which perpetuates his fall into the well. This “mad”

action really resembles a physical refutation of George's threats to reveal her identity. We can see that Lucy has little faith in a woman's word against such masculine accusations; thus, emancipation for her can only come through George's silence. No one can deny that Lucy's actions here are villainous, but why? Standing before her is the man who has deserted her without warning. He leaves the country never to write and abandons not only his wife but also his son in the hopes of acquiring wealth. Poverty stricken and destitute, Helen Talboys leaves home to seek employment in order to support herself. By changing her name, she only secures protection from what she believes would enable George to find her, forcing her to live an unhappy, poor life. Angry for his desertion and believing him dead, Lucy Graham accepts the hand of an established wealthy man who offers her the life she always dreamed of having.

Whether this is an example of selfish nature or not, her secret identity and lies to the man who so dotingly fulfills her dreams prescribe her as a villain. But as the novel progresses, even these lies do not seem to be the real source of the problem. Rather, it is her conscious role-playing of the "angel in the house" rather than her subconscious internalization of that constitutes her villainy. That is to say, she transgresses what society considers a *natural* feminine persona precisely because, in performing it, she highlights what is so *unnatural* about it. Thus, she maintains the personality the patriarchal order has prescribed for her, but neither fulfills it as angel nor undermines it as demon.

Not an Angel, Not A Demon Either. . .

The angel/demon figure that Auerbach proposes would actually transgress the angelic, thus threatening the male order, yet functioning in an openly prescribed way. For if one transgresses the angelic, the convention would be to see her transplanted to the other side of the polarity, functioning as a demon. This type of move does not take place in Lady Audley's case because she never refrains from employing the angelic, and her demonic traits are merely constructions of the narrator. Therefore, Lucy finds an anomalous amount of power in an otherwise limited role.

At first, Braddon's scheme furthers our understanding of the glorified angel's potential for villainy. As a product of an androcentric culture, Lady Audley's transgressions and villainy seem more perplexing due to her otherwise outwardly angelic nature. This role-playing makes her fall and villainy seem all the more pronounced; however, this is the role that society deems appropriate and assumes is innate. It is her knowledge of the angelic part she must play that spites the institutions which enforce such a persona. She cannot be the purely innocent, essential angel because she is clearly role-playing and exploiting the position. Nor is she demonic either because the narrator tactfully pairs her selfish and villainous with Lucy's own voice, which expresses a woman scorned and embittered due to her husband's abandonment. She seems to fully understand her position at the mercy of a skewed social system, one that will find fault with her bigamy, deceit, and affinity for money, instead of finding fault with George's initial actions. Therefore, Lucy wants to *sustain* her position of the angel in the house, not to exit its confines. Only in such a vexed but honored position could Lucy secure the protection she needs from implication in villainous acts. Furthermore, these villainous acts would never have ensued if that status were not repeatedly threatened by Robert Audley. The author's use of Lucy as the angel and then her later reversal of this portrayal only to be coupled with Lucy's voice that role-played the angel suggests that a domesticated woman can acquire power over patriarchy, even while oppressed and confined by this position.

... Then Mad?

Although Braddon illustrates power that stems from the confining idea of an inherent angel, Lady Audley's character also calls into question what one can define as woman's essential nature. It seems clear, at least with her characterization of Lady Audley, that Braddon hints at a deconstruction of the polarities. Because the either/or fallacy no longer applies, her character threatens a patriarchal order that assumes women are naturally angelic and that would never realize the position as a tactic to acquire power and superiority.

On the face of it, however, Lucy's self-proclamation of madness reclassifies this woman who formerly defies categorization. The first hint we get of Lucy's fear of her own insanity occurs during her emotional battle, when she considers that infamous trip to the Castle Inn. While talking aloud to Phoebe, Lucy reveals that another entity aside from Robert Audley threatens her: "She had another and far more dangerous foe—a foe who was not to be bribed or bought off" (301). With this statement, readers can later make a connection to Lucy's assumed knowledge of her own madness inherited from her mother. No longer is Robert Audley the danger to her position, but this other trait that will most likely destroy her newfound status of wealth.

However, Braddon appears to purposefully contrive Lucy's sense of madness. The reader cannot overlook that Lucy's actions never appear as the work of a madwoman. Her anger and emotions may take hold, but her actions are always a logical response to men who have made themselves her enemy. Lucy's first outburst attributes madness as the force that drives her, as she says to Robert Audley, "It is a great triumph . . . is it not . . . a wonderful victory . . . you have used your cool, calculating, frigid, luminous intellect to a noble purpose . . . you have conquered a MADWOMAN" (340). With contempt, Lucy deems Robert's achievement over her as an easy battle because she is mad. She detracts from Robert's success by stating that it was not only an easy battle, but also one that eventually would have been won in time, due to the degenerative disease. It appears as though Lucy accepts this definition of herself, but if she cannot claim the status of the angel any longer, employing madness as a scapegoat provides a way, at least at first, to justify her prior actions. Clearly, Lady Audley could perform this madness as well. Elizabeth Tilley, however, sees Lady Audley's eventual incarceration as her ultimate failure and the "only role that Lady Audley does not choose for herself" (201). She views Braddon's character as one who deconstructs gothic literary conventions, as opposed to seeing Lady Audley complicating social classifications. Nevertheless, I would argue that Braddon does not seem to want us to really believe in the madness. For example, although the men, including the doctor, seem to later accept

this definition so hastily, Braddon also includes the doctor's earlier testimony, which suggests there is nothing in Lucy's actions to warrant a diagnosis of insanity. The doctor's belief in the diagnosis has a strategic place within the text. After he has told Robert that Lady Audley does not exhibit qualities of madness, advocating that her mother's illness probably does not serve as the catalyst for her behavior, he then hears the story of George's disappearance from Robert Audley. The doctor receives hearsay from Robert Audley and agrees to see the accused woman based only on assumptions of her involvement. Immediately following his consultation with her, the doctor reports that he has "talked to the lady, and *we understand each other very well* . . . there is latent insanity" (372, emphasis mine). With this statement, the doctor alludes to his own recognition of Lady Audley's performances and thereby her defiance and destruction of a social order. The emphasis on the word "we" also shows that not only does he *understand* her, but she, presenting an anomaly, *understands* him and his position as well. Now, because of fear, it seems only plausible that the doctor would rethink his former philosophy and affirm that the inheritance of madness does play a role in her case. Furthermore, the doctor even admits that "she has the cunning of madness, with the prudence of intelligence . . . she is dangerous" (372). On the surface it may look as though the doctor refers to Lady Audley's attempted murder of George; however, this comment might actually stem from his acknowledgment of Lady Audley's cunning and intellect-- a dangerous combination, at least for the patriarchal order.

By having such a keen knowledge of feminine stereotypes, Lady Audley employs whichever role seems suitable and thus defies conventional normalcy. The role-playing of madness affords her the next possible answer to her situation. As if outwardly stating, "okay, I will give you what you expect," Lady Audley's choice to perform madness allows Braddon to highlight the true threat such a character poses. The tendency for an androcentric culture to fear that which resists rational classification, and then to place that deviant away in a madhouse, surfaces here as a rule of society that Lady Audley fully recognizes and can imitate, thus further distinguishing her "madness" from any essential trait.

Of course, the men want to believe in the madness. Lucy has long since represented the angel and exemplified the ideal; the thought of her ability to feign this persona, and to do so for the purpose of remaining in the role ordained for her, is conventionally incomprehensible. Robert Audley, therefore, must remove her from society and hide her away. He goes as far as to remove her from England in order to further symbolize the need for distance and her foreignness to the social system. To place her in a madhouse is to avoid having to recognize the threat she imposes on the male sense of order and the need for the angel's unconscious authenticity.

During Lady Audley's debate with Robert concerning her madness, the narrator's commentary and Lady Audley's own dialogue again diverge from one another. The narrator takes a good deal of time bringing attention to Lady Audley's physical appearance. While waiting to undergo the doctor's examination, the narrator informs the reader that Lady Audley looks at herself in the mirror and thinks about her beauty. Introducing the idea of beauty and vanity as Lady Audley's main concern, the narrator writes, "Whatever they did to her, they must leave her her beauty" (366). The use of third-person pronouns here implies a mere speculation on Lady Audley's thoughts. Although no one could argue that beauty did not function as her main tool, the narrator still appears to want us to view the self-centered, but eternally beautiful woman. To add to this typical narrative technique, when Lady Audley approaches the madhouse for the first time, although she speaks with directness and rationality, the narrator focuses on actions that could possibly denote madness. Lady Audley says to Robert Audley:

You see I do not fear to make my confession to,
you. . . . for two reasons. The first is that you dare
not use it against me, because you know it would
kill your uncle to see me in a criminal dock; the
second is, that the law could pronounce no worse
sentence than this, a life-long imprisonment in a
mad-house. You see I do not thank you for your

mercy . . . I know exactly what it is worth.” (387)

With these words, Lady Audley appears strong-minded and functions as the strongest opponent. She clarifies her understanding of the situation and recognizes the full implications of such an incarceration. Even though the madhouse presents the worst possible end to Lady Audley's actions, her understanding and knowledge of what the male order and her immediate enemies will do to her still resonates as an indefinable power over them. Lady Audley's resignation to her fate does not take place immediately. In fact, prior to this statement Lady Audley appears to fight this incarceration and shouts, “Has my beauty brought me to this?”(384). Although she too at this moment refers to her beauty, it seems more like contemplation on the way in which her beauty and angelic guise has failed to keep her from this consequence, and not the actions and delirium of an insane woman. This question boasts disbelief of the fact that a woman would need more than beauty, given that angelic nature and beauty have waylaid such retaliation thus far. However, Lady Audley's questioning of such a factor really reflects upon her knowledge of her culture, not on a magnified sense of self-importance. During this scene, while Lady Audley expresses sardonic disbelief in her fate despite her perfecting of the angel role, the narrator adds physical actions to the scene that hint at a maddened state of mind. Simultaneously with the above question, the narrator writes that Lady Audley “pushes her hair fiercely from her white forehead, and fixes her dilated eyes upon Robert Audley”(384). Here, according to the narrator, the angel clearly evolves into a maddened, irrational woman. Her erratic behavior contradicts her questioning behavior and resistant strength. As if to underscore Lady Audley's potential madness, the narrator directs the reader away from the nature of her questions to actions that surface as potentially dangerous and a result of quickening insanity. However, to ignore former instances of the narrator's intrusions, which have consistently defined Lady Audley and then redefined her, is to refuse to consider the possibility here that Lady Audley is not mad at all, but merely still performing what she understands as woman's conventional punishment. Furthermore, although

the narrator wants us to recognize the implications of madness, Braddon employs the two dialogues to actually highlight not only the tensions but the performance as well.

Braddon's Ending: Subversive or Counterproductive?

Critics have consistently focused on the novel's ending and Lady Audley's incarceration and then death to come to explicate Braddon's purpose with such a character. Many critics see Lady Audley's madness and death as a conventional ending to a story that details a remarkable example of female villainy. As Tabitha Sparks argues, "Lucy remains steadfastly "bad," never once lamenting her crimes and deceptions" (201). However, to merely see Lucy as "bad" or as a villain who must suffer consequences is to overlook the implications of her self-proclaimed madness. Still yet, other critics such as Elizabeth Langland attempt to draw connections between Lady Audley's self-presentation of madness and her consistent childish behavior. Although Langland accounts for Lady Audley's oppression and impossible circumstances, she believes in Lady Audley's madness at the end. In the presentation of Lady Audley's madness and eventual demise, Langland reads an inevitable link between what Lady Audley formerly presented herself as (a child) and the madness she reveals in the end. In other words, Langland suggests that "the very qualities that have led to their idealization as ladies facilitate their condemnation as madwomen"(12). Here, she reasons that the domestic angel -- what men would have all women essentially be -- irrevocably leads them to act in irrational, immature, and selfish ways, thus eventually likening women and even propelling their madness. Langland's assumptions about how patriarchal control itself elicits madness and locks women into a vexed angel role do not account for the fact that Lady Audley chooses to represent herself as mad. More recent critical assumptions, however, theorize that Lady Audley is not the only mad character, but that her male enemies and specifically Robert Audley are as well. Pamela Gilbert finds that the narrator's comment: 'there is nothing so delicate, so fragile, as that invisible balance upon which the mind is always trembling . . . Mad today and sane tomorrow . . . Who is quite safe from the trembling of the balance' proves that madness really afflicts both Lady Audley and her oppressors. Thus, for

Gilbert, Robert Audley's incarceration of Lucy is merely a way to safely protect and to hide his own insanity. I would contend, however, that with this idea Gilbert still assumes that Lady Audley really is mad, a judgement that we cannot really take for truth, given her obvious capacity to role-play. Gilbert and other critics see this diagnosis of madness and eventual death as a way for Braddon to restore patriarchal order. Thus, Robert Audley's need to show Lady Audley as mad and to safely distance her from his society is, according to Gilbert, to negate a woman's evil, which she acquires by "having masculine ambitions and taking on masculine roles" (95).

However, Gilbert's assumption that Robert's fear stems from Lady Audley's masculinity falls short of defining what Lady Audley's role really does. It cannot be masculine in the true sense of the word because she clearly retains her femininity, making her quite more threatening. To say that Lady Audley's ambition is solely masculine possibly detracts from Braddon's purely feminine cause in creating such a character. To further lessen Lady Audley's effects on the social order, Gilbert suggests that "Lady Audley's story shows that women are most evil when they conform to social expectations" (96). Although it is true that Lady Audley's real threat comes from her ability to role-play what patriarchy deems conventional, the syntax of this statement skirts the idea that the whole point might be to actually highlight the evils and misconceptions of that order, not of Lady Audley's inherently evil nature. Later, Gilbert seems to contradict this former idea, and argues that "Braddon's departure from tradition is not in presenting the evil mermaid, but in giving her a voice which does not only sing sweet lies for men but tells them unpleasant truths" (98). Here, Gilbert comes close to the real weight of Lady Audley's character. I would argue that it is in her so-called "sweet lies" that Lady Audley actually sings these truths about the social state of women and patriarchy's hand in making of every woman a passive, innocent angelic figure. We cannot separate Lady Audley's role-playing from these truths. What she professes about herself and what she obviously performs speaks volumes about her unclassifiable position. It is these truths about her identity and inability to be categorized, what

Gilbert calls “patriarchy’s dirty little secrets,” that Robert Audley must hide by placing Lady Audley in an asylum.

The many perspectives concerning Lady Audley’s madness fail to address Braddon’s purpose in creating such a character who borders on showcasing truths and exposing patriarchy’s failings, only to have her suffer a very conventional demise. Furthermore, why does Braddon spend so much time, as I have shown, in creating tensions between what Lady Audley says of herself and how the narrator characterizes her? Why create tensions between Lady Audley’s self-proclamations and the narrator’s perceptions only then to reverse them? Although the shifts are subtle, it does seem that Braddon wants us to notice these shifts in characterization. The narrator wants us to first see an angelic woman, then a demonic villain, and finally a maddened woman. This progression of characteristics mirrors the personas the male order might use to characterize many women of the time. First, they characterize their hope for the ideal, then, finding that does not work, see her as demonic, and then, unable to understand how their definitions keep falling short, place her in an asylum. Braddon’s careful placement of the narrator’s classifications and Lady Audley’s own dialogue brings attention to these discrepancies. Lady Audley role plays conventions and merely reacts to extenuating circumstances in logical ways, thus distinguishing her from both the narrator and Auerbach’s classifications of demon or angel. Therefore, she resonates as an example of femininity that does not operate from either pole, but somewhere else entirely.

Identifying this unnamed space is not as important as understanding how Braddon’s narrative technique *and* Lady Audley’s madness highlight the implications of this unclassifiable position. Shoshana Felman’s theory on women and madness proves valuable in exploring Braddon’s choice to end Lady Audley’s life in such a way. We must not forget that Lady Audley chooses to assign herself madness. As Felman suggests, madness is a conventional part of a woman’s behavior. “What we consider ‘madness,’” Felman writes, “is either the acting out of the devalued female role or the total or partial rejection of one’s sex-role stereotype” (118). For Lady

Audley, then, she acts out the female role yet fails to make a convincing performance of it. Thus, by choosing to say: "I'm a Madwoman," Lady Audley continues the performance of femininity, as she has done throughout the novel and becomes "doubly" mad according to Felman's definition. We know that Lady Audley does not want to go to the asylum; however, her choice of professing madness supplies Braddon with a way of exposing the fallacies behind madness as well. In fact, Felman affirms that madness is actually "a request for help" (118). This idea clearly separates madness, as Felman suggests, from a "contestation or rebellion," but actually reemphasizes how embedded a woman is in her need to seek help from her male counterparts. Therefore, after her role-playing and secret identity is revealed, she resorts to claiming a position that functions as a part of female conditioning.

If Braddon's purpose is to reveal the ideological force behind a woman's claim to madness, then why silence Lady Audley in death? Felman employs Luce Irigaray's theory on feminine discourse to aid her in explaining the way in which the patriarchal order has worked to "exclude the woman from the production of speech" (Felman 119). The female/male binary, according to Irigaray, defines the woman as the male's other, thus the *other* is always defined according to what it is not--masculine. Therefore, because identity is grounded in what she coins "masculine sameness," the "possibility that a thought would neither spring from nor return to this masculine sameness is simply unthinkable" (Felman 119). We can apply this theory to Lady Audley's circumstances at the end of the novel. When she claims madness, her oppressors feel the need and urgency to detect it themselves. In comparison, Felman uses Balzac's short story "Adieu" to reason that the voices of the madwomen in Balzac's story are eclipsed by the psychoanalytic, thus masculine, logic of the men who must work to diagnose or to "cure" them. Similarly, the doctor assigned to Lady Audley's case would rather refocus the attention upon his own logic, than reflect upon what Lady Audley actually says. In fact, Braddon hides the conversation from the reader, thus showing the reality of Lady Audley's situation. We only hear that they understand one another, but the doctor never elaborates. Through Braddon's technique

of hiding certain information, she illustrates the way in which the patriarchal order will resist a speech or discourse they do not understand. In addition, Felman theorizes that men who speak for their patients, clients, wives, etc., reestablish the woman's status as a "silent and subordinate object" (120).

The driving force of Felman's project, therefore, is to take up Irigaray's work and find a way in which women can "be thought of outside of the Masculine/Feminine framework . . . without being subordinated to a primordial masculine model"(121). Particularly important to my own project is Felman's second question, which stems from this first one: "How can madness be conceived outside of its dichotomous opposition to sanity, without being subjugated to reason?"(121). To further complicate this binary and the way in which madness seems locked into a definition of opposition to sanity, Felman presents the paradoxical existence of woman, whose madness defines her as opposite to saneness (masculine reason), but actually makes her what is *not* woman. (127). In other words, the patriarchal order sees woman as its opposite. Therefore, reason and logic resides on the opposite side of her pole. The binary sane/mad parallels the binary of Masculine/Feminine; thus, madness defines her, but complicates her existence as the male ideal. The angel in the house is not considered mad; yet, in order to be woman, she must reside on that side of the polarity. Felman goes on to theorize that through woman's paradoxical existence, "the narcissistic economy of the Masculine universal equivalent tries to eliminate, under the label madness, nothing other than *feminine difference*" (128, emphasis Felman's). Felman sees woman's ultimate goal as to be able to find a way to speak and function out of "the cultural imposition of madness without taking up the critical and therapeutic positions of reason: how to avoid speaking both as *mad* and as *not mad*" (132, emphasis Felman's). To speak as mad is to reaffirm that woman is not male or logical. However, paradoxically to not speak from madness places the woman safely in the binary as well because she would then fulfill the ideal.

On the face of it, Lady Audley's death may look counterproductive, and like a regression from the patriarchal fallacies she exposed; however, with Lady Audley's death Braddon shows how such endings to 19th century novels really function. As Felman suggests, death of the villainous or mad woman helps to "eradicate all trace of violence and anguish, of scandal, or upheaval" (132). However, in the case of Lady Audley, her own voice matched with those who would strive to define her and then fail, makes her death seem quite different. Locked into her feminine role and the binaries that trap her, Lady Audley's character, through death, highlights the plight of finding a purely feminine discourse. Placing her in an asylum and leaving her to die might seem like a failure, but the subversive voice that revealed her resistance to classification resounds. It is the fear that she proposes to the male order that resonates as her lasting legacy.

Chapter 2

Self-Representing the Fiend: Biased Narrative Strategy, Authorial Victimization, or Subversive?

In his introduction to the 2000 edition of Sheridan Le Fanu's *Uncle Silas*, Victor Sage asserts that the "plot of *Uncle Silas* announces itself, quite explicitly . . . the young girl is incarcerated in the ogre's castle, forbidden to open the door of a certain chamber while he is away"(xvi). Here, Sage outlines a familiar gothic scene, which promises suspense, intrigue, the damsel in distress, and a treacherous villain who puts a young girl's life at risk. Sensational fiction revives such gothic scenes, thereby creating character archetypes—the enigmatic lord of a castle or manor with the suspicious past, and the young, often angelic woman who must undoubtedly stay trapped within the manor at the mercy of powerful oppressors. Although Sage does make important comparisons between *Uncle Silas* and gothic story lines, he does not account for Le Fanu's central female antagonist-- Madame de la Rougierre. Madame, Maud Ruthyn's governess, appears as one of the greatest threats to the young girl's wellbeing. In fact, for the first half of the novel, Madame's character functions as this villainous "ogre" that, according to Sage, dominates the narrative in the person of Maud's Uncle Silas himself. In overlooking Madame's character as a noteworthy villain, Sage ignores the implications of such a woman who transgresses her otherwise mundane position of governess to acquire, at least for a time, the threatening and fear-evoking position of Maud's sole oppressor.

On the face of it, Madame's ability to consistently evoke fear in Maud is not surprising considering contemporary assumptions about the governess's borrowed power and potential detrimental effects on the morality of their young charges. As Teresa Mangum suggests, the governess, especially foreign governesses, propelled a social scrutiny and widespread debate concerning their suitability as moral educators. "The hiring of a governess . . . signified a family's financial and social status," Magnum writes, "but when governess numbers increased, suspicions of their character, class, qualifications, and fitness for the task of educating impressionable

children escalated” (216). Therefore, social anxiety stemming from whether or not a governess is suitable actually placed her at a potential level for threatening authority. In addition, Mary Poovey adds that during the Victorian era, many reporters “aligned the governess with the prostitute” (Mangum 222). One such contemporary reporter, William Tait, argued that he had personally found “numerous former governesses among the prostitutes he interviewed” (Mangum 222). This faulty correlation instigated fear in the aristocrats about the wellbeing of their families and opened wider the chasm between upper and working classes. However, as Mangum suggests, if the governess was allowed to infiltrate the domesticated home, she would eventually and quite unsettlingly close the gaps between such boundaries:

“The governess [must] try to make herself necessary to the comfort of the father of the family in which she resided and by delicate and unnoticed flattery gradually to gain her point, to the disparagement of the mother, and the destruction of mutual happiness.” (Mangum 221)

Because she takes on the mother’s status not only as educational and moral caregiver but also as partner with the father in gauging the children’s progress, the governess functions as a type of harlot, metaphorically taking the mother’s place in her relationship with the father. The governess who displaces the mother and appears to the father as competent and concerned does in fact become a type of seductress. Given that the father, the patriarchal head, determines the longevity of her placement, she must consistently impress the father. According to Mangum, however, the governess of a single-father family can operate in a different, more powerful exchange. As the children’s sole feminine influence, this governess can often completely usurp the absent mother’s position, thus functioning on a higher level than other servants, and as a type of “head” for the domestic circle. In order to maintain this status, the governess must exhibit qualities that the father would find suitable and ideal for his children. Completely aware of her newfound authority

as opposed to her former precarious social position, Madame Rougierre must appear to Maud's father as an exemplary role model for his young daughter.

What the governess achieves through acceptable actions differs in each specific case, but for Madame she gains respect and eventual trust, which she later exploits with the hopes of acquiring unlawful access to Maud's father's will. Thus, throughout the novel it is no secret that Madame functions as a villain; however, describing her as villainous allows the *author* by way of the narrator to negate and eventually have his character suffer from "deserved" consequences. In highlighting only the so-called villainous acts, an author can satisfy readers by eventually bringing the threatening character to an end.

Madame fulfills this authorial construction of villainy by not only selfishly attempting to acquire wealth, but also through acquiring the position of Maud's governess. While she might actually fulfill the suspicions of those who have grown to criticize her job, Madame is able to perform different roles, much like Braddon's Lady Audley. Just as Lady Audley performs the perfected domesticated angel, Madame begins her stay at the Ruthyn manor endeavoring to appear as the model governess for Maud. Although clearly distinguishable from the angelic woman that Lady Audley performs, the position of governess comes with its own benefits and confinements. As the exemplary governess, Madame will succeed in gaining respect and authority from both Maud and her father, thus enabling her to pursue her own deviant purposes. Yet, by pursuing one of the only respectable feminine careers at the time, Madame compromises her financial independence implies, ultimately depending upon the family's needs and the father's wealth. Like the domesticated angel who receives honor and protection while simultaneously suffering the consequences of limitations and restrictions, the governess too must deal with the vexed positions of having authority over children, while remaining subservient to the father. The most remarkable comparison between the two women, therefore, is their choice to maintain the semblance of a position which might give them social status, honor, or respectability, but inevitably still binds them to the oppressive whims of a patriarchal head.

Although Madame often presents characteristics worthy of the respect and trust due to a suitable governess, her simultaneous self-presentation of villainy and violent behavior complicates our understanding of her character as the morally sound instructor. Here, Madame inhabits a persona that Auerbach would call the demonic, a drawing from inherent demonic tendencies, while outwardly resembling the more angelic side of the polarity.

However, Madame's demonic tendencies also work as a type of performance. In fact, she does not function according to Auerbach's logic, where either inherent angels perform demon qualities, or inherent demons perform the angelic. Rather, Madame stands beyond this Auerbachian taxonomy because she performs both the moral governess *and* the villainous role.

To further complicate the narrative, LeFanu employs a narrator who through her biases and obvious prejudices adds to the reader's confusion and disbelief in Madame's essential demonic qualities. Although Madame wishes to present herself in often undesirable and threatening ways, these negative accounts assumedly surface from Maud's own later writings of the events. Apparent prejudices and second-hand information work together to create what we know of Madame's character, thus calling into question the validity and reliability of such accusations.

Moreover, by using Maud as the much older and supposedly wiser narrator, LeFanu highlights Maud's failures in fulfilling the angelic role as well. Maud often prefaces her descriptions of Madame with suggestions that she has compiled second-hand information and/or borrowed details from fictional dreams. By making Maud's biases obvious, Le Fanu calls attention to the young girl's flaws in presenting honesty, a virtue thought to be essential to the angel in the house. If leading the reader astray and/ or persuading the reader of Madame's demonic persona strategically eclipses Madame's own lack of conventional feminine attributes, then she cannot fulfill the angel role.

By considering Maud's own intentions in narrating Madame as demonic and her own possible prejudices, we can uncover how LeFanu deals with the villains's victimization as well as

the narrator's failings in fulfilling the angelic role. I will first examine how Madame works to present herself as the model governess and then explore how she often performs fiendish activities, and to what purpose.

Authentic Moral Instructor?

On the face of it, Madame looks as if she fulfills the governess role with complete competence. In her very first meeting with Maud, she inquires about the child's former education, appears interested in her prior language training, and immediately suggests that she is very sure she will "love the child very much" (27). These professions of affection continue throughout the first few weeks of Madame's stay. The governess consistently worries over Maud's physical health during their walks and often appears concerned about the effects of the weather and exertion on Maud's sense of enjoyment. Thus, with a "caressing pat," Madame coddles Maud and appears as though she sincerely wishes to befriend her young charge. In addition to her presentation of compassion for Maud, Madame also seems to present the moral requirements for a woman in such a position-- ending several evenings in perusing the Bible. Often found praying, Madame looks as though she epitomizes the desires of a father searching for an adequate role model for his young daughter. Through her display of morally sound characteristics, Madame gains not only the admiration of the Curate, Rector, and Maud's father, but also continues to impress the surrounding residents. Routine visits to Maud's father and constant updates on the young girl's progress and digressions momentarily satisfy and convince Madame's employer that his daughter receives exemplary instruction from her new governess.

However, although Madame's outward appearance suggests a commendable inherent persona, the perfected nature of her actions implies that she might be enacting a role. Furthermore, as we read such instances of Madame's exhibitions of piety, the narrator (a much older Maud) supplies the reader with knowledge that Madame spoke kindly to Maud only in public or when Maud's father conspicuously watched from a window. Maud's narration also informs readers that Madame's educational lessons never really pointed toward an understanding

of any subject. “Madame de la Rougierre,” Maud remembers, “was always quite ready to explain everything ‘a fond;’ but somehow her ‘explications,’ as she termed them, were not very intelligible” (27). Although, Madame had previously taken such an interest in Maud’s education, we now see that she merely performed the expected concern and interest of any instructor. Maud further explains that Madame’s lessons often involved reprimands and consequences that Maud could never connect to a probable cause. For instance, according to Maud, Madame often instructed her to read the Bible for punishment; however, the particular verse had “no special fitness” to Madame’s specific offense. Madame’s misuse of the Bible in Maud’s instruction also exposes her fraudulence, and conflicts with our former impression of her as an avid and authentic Christian.

Not only do Madame’s failings in transmitting acceptable and useful knowledge expose her performance, but she often slips into fits of rage and violence, thus furthering our understanding of her true lack of compassion for Maud. While alone, Madame consistently refers to Maud as a “wicked cheaile,” taunting and berating the girl whose affections she publicly professes to desire. Therefore, it is clear that Madame wants to present herself as the epitome of a dutiful governess; however, in the presence of Maud alone, Madame discloses what might seem like an inherent demonic persona. On one specific occasion, Madame interrogates Maude concerning the existence of her father’s will. While Maude assures Madame that she knows nothing of a will, Madame punishes her by grabbing her finger and threatening: “You do know, and you must tell petite dur-tete, or I will break a your leetle finger” (37). Madame follows this threat by actually bending the finger, and in a demanding voice suggests, “So she is going to be good cheaile, and to tell everything to her affectionate governante” (37). Here, Maude narrates the way in which each act of violence or harsh speech immediately precedes a statement that exhibits a self-proclaimed love and affection for the young girl. As if relating compassion with forced compliance, Madame role-plays the feminine sentiment while maintaining what appears as the coarser, more demanding part of her personality. In addition, Madame’s insistence on the

will's location reveals what she might have initially intended in taking the position of Maud's governess. Although the position of governess affords her limited authority, Madame does have the opportunity to search out information about the Ruthyn's economic status.

With locating the will as her main objective in determining not only Maud's father's economic status, but also how (as we later find out) Silas is accounted for, Madame must consistently keep up appearances as the suitable governess, while simultaneously evoking fear in order to maintain Maud's compliance. Not only does she often inquire about Maud's father's health and the will's contents, but she also places Maud in threatening situations in which the intended goal is for Maud to spurn any tendency to rebel. Maud herself qualifies her seemingly complete obedience with the disclaimer: "Confidential talking with Madame, strange to say, implied not confidence; it resulted from fear- - it was deprecatory . . . I treated her as if she had human sympathies, in the hope that they might be generated somehow" (35). With this statement, Maud alludes to Madame's successes in combining a performance of the trustworthy governess with the apparent necessity to appear as a threatening and powerful oppressor. In addition, Maud hints that Madame does not have inherent human qualities, thus likening her to something completely foreign and outside of humanity. While the reason for her interest in the will is unclear at this point, reveals a deeper, sinister intent. For example, while taking a walk one day through Church Scarsdale, Madame leaves Maud alone so that a young man, with whom Madame has previously arranged a meeting, can scare Maud. The young man supposedly has lost his glove, and determining to get a good look at Maud, repeatedly tries to find it under her foot. Obviously uncomfortable, the young girl feels threatened by the man's closeness and disreputable appearance. The young girl remembers that she was frightened and "more than offended" (45). Making what appear to Maud as lewd comments, the young man remarks, "Gi'e her [Madame] my compliments, and say I said you were a beauty, Miss" (46). This incident shows the reader Madame's two purposes in instructing the young man to scare Maud. Firstly, Madame presents herself to Maud as a source of fear because she clearly knows the young man and has allowed

such a situation to occur. Intriguingly, however, Madame must also present herself as Maud's rescuer. Not knowing that the young man would let it slip that they were in any way connected, Madame wants to appear as the one who can save Maud from such situations. Thus, for Maud, Madame functions as her oppressor, but also often functions as the only person who can save her.

Likewise, in similar situations Madame often arranges potentially dangerous events in order to prove to Maud's father that she is necessary in protecting the wellbeing of his daughter. While walking back from one of their many outdoor excursions, both Madame and Maud are met by a group of men who as drunken criminals or gypsies. While seemingly donning the persona of Maud's protectress, Madame actually works to detain the young girl from running away. While yelling out to Maud, "You fool, Maud, weel you come with me See wat you are doing," Madame attempts to frustrate the girl's choices, but also wants to make Maud think that Madame will provide the best plan. Once it seems as though Madame's plan has failed, Madame notices the gamekeeper and grabs Maud to run for safety, making it appear as though she has really orchestrated the escape. Thus, if Maud would happen to repeat the story to her father, Madame can affirm that she outwardly acted in the best possible manner.

In addition to Madame's obvious role playing of protectress for Maud, she also strives to present an outward adherence to social manners. For example, when Madame first hears of Lady Knollys' expected visit, she begs Maude to introduce her because she is well aware of the normalcy and politeness of such a gesture: "Won't you present--a me, pray -- I would so like"(46). This obvious desire for a meeting with Lady Knollys not only presents the conventional and expected attitude toward a woman of status and wealth, but also aids in reassuring Maud of Madame's interest in her connections. Madame's performance of excitement and anticipation about the visit immediately dissolves, however, when Lady Knollys requests an introduction. Madame obviously pretends that she suffers from a debilitating illness. Her reasoning for avoidance results perhaps from a prior acquaintanceship with Lady Knollys, a former encounter that Lady Knollys insinuates but never completely confirms.

By exploiting feigned hardships, Madame appears legitimately ill and truly mistreated. Playing the new role of illness, Madame laments to Maud “cruel cheaile! You know I have a pain of the ear which makes me ‘orribly suffer at this moment, and you demand me whether I will not converse with strangers . . . I did not think you would be so unkain, Maud” (54). Here, Madame role-plays in order to delay exposure, but the way in which she enacts her role conveys an understanding of victimization and helplessness.

When she eventually does speak to Lady Knollys, Madame does not deny recognition of the woman, but only emphasizes the fact that her name changed because of a marriage. Madame points to her wealthy marriage in order to highlight her own social status, thus implying an equally high social level as Lady Knollys and attempting to raise herself above the governess vocation. By insinuating that she occupies a higher status, Madame hints at her own duplicitous nature and an undisclosed reason for her present employment as Maud’s governess.

While she does not use the “angel in the house” persona to gain authority, she does have knowledge of the role of competent, female governess. It is this knowledge of how to use such an otherwise limited amount of authority that reinforces Madame’s threats and transgression. Maud informs her readers that Madame consistently went to her father, Mr. Ruthyn, and “made excuses to consult him about my reading, and to confide in him her sufferings, as I learned, from my contumacy and temper” (31). On the surface, Madame appears as the normal, conventional governess, one who displays constant concern about her pupil’s progress and disposition. Immediately following this statement, Maud asserts that she, in fact, “was altogether quiet and submissive” (31). Attempting to dissuade the reader from believing that she actually presented a problem for her governess, Maud also shows the way in which Madame knowledgeably plays a role. Furthermore, the mention of Maud’s punishment from her father due to Madame’s accusations underlines the governess’ power because of the father’s beliefs in the morality and limits of the position. Madame’s obvious villainous activity, unbeknownst to Sir Ruthyn, causes him to overlook Madame’s possible flaws and discrepancies because the position of governess is

not usually one of supreme authority. According to Maud, Madame traffics in an extraordinary authority due to her gender and position:

Man's estimate of woman is higher than woman's own. Perhaps
in their relations to man they are generally more trustworthy--perhaps
woman's is juster, and the other an appointed illusion. I don't know;
but so it is ordained (33).

This quote, which seems to disrupt the flow of the narrative, has two purposes. First, on the surface, Maud successfully distracts attention from the validity of her father's actions and hints at Madame's ability to dupe her father. Second, Le Fanu enables Maud to conclude that Madame achieves her power through the confines of gender limits. Moreover, Madame's expulsion from the home takes place only after Maud convinces her father that Madame has a key to his personal desk. In fact, it is only when the *father* later realizes that Madame snoops in his own legal documents that her threat becomes more pronounced and immediate to the overall wellbeing of the family structure.

By presenting herself as the appropriate governess in a performance that masks her own villainous purposes, Madame might actually demonstrate Auerbach's thesis that literary female characters, if not inherently angelic, usually function as inherently demonic, and are limited to performing the angelic ideal of femininity. Although we cannot say that Madame performs a traditional angelic role, she does in fact work hard to portray another patriarchal sanctioned domestic vocation. She obviously occupies a more influential status than that honored and passive wife, especially since she lives in a single-father home where she has the sole authority to educate the budding young woman who by patriarchal standards will most likely grow into the domesticated angel herself. Since we know that Madame possibly abuses this authority for her own purposes, she threatens the male order, which depends upon the longevity of the angel role to sustain their own power and superiority. However, her threat is not in overtly educating Maud of the angel role's flaws or revealing its oppressive qualities, but merely endangering the life of

someone who should become the angelic woman and maintain the status as LeFanu's heroine of the novel.

Although these above examples illustrate Madame's deceitful persona and her possible intentions to endanger her young charge, Madame's and Maud's trip to Church Scarsdale reveals a startlingly shift in the reader's perception of Madame as merely deviant and threateningly authoritative to overtly demonic. In this scene, Madame leads Maud against her will to the cemetery surrounding Church Scarsdale. Here, Madame taunts the young girl and tries to engage her in a walk among the graves. While Maud grows more frightened, Madame seems to feed off of the young girl's fears and begins dancing between the graves, enacting what Maud terms a "witch's waltz" (41). However, even without Maud's narrative intrusions, Madame's behavior could clearly cast her as demonic or fiendish. In fact, Madame openly expresses to Maud that she has a connection with the dead and that if the young girl watches closely she will see her governess "die here to-day, for half an hour, and be among them" (41). As the two make their way closer to the graves, Madame, raises her nose and sniffs the air as if, like an inhuman beast, she could detect by scent alone the smell of the dead. Not only does she profess gradated senses, but also appears to know the dead intimately as she gives them names and assures Maud that she will meet five of her dead friends that day. When Maud tells Madame that she will not follow her into the graveyard, Madame does not force her, but rather runs ahead shouting "a horrid yell from her enormous mouth" (42). With these actions, Madame does look as though she exceeds even Auerbach's more muted classification of a metaphorical demon. The governess moves into more of an inhuman, fiendish realm, in which she appears supernatural and even more threatening because her actions are spontaneous and beyond the limits of rational understanding.

By evoking in Maud the paradoxical combination of fear and dependence, Madame evolves into a more threatening villain. Yet even though scenes highlight Madame's in keeping pretence of concerned governess, as well as her inherent greed and devilish villainy, Madame's

characterization as a witch-like ghoul is in fact a form of self-representation, which likens the infamous scene in Church Scarsdale to a performance as well.

The Versatile Performer

While we can see Madame's need to keep Maud in constant fear of her volatile persona, her fiendish self-presentation seems more a performative choice than an authorial construction. Intending to show Maud that she is both fearless, and supernatural, Madame succeeds in maintaining Maud's ultimate obedience. If we revisit the scene in Church Scarsdale, Madame's performance becomes more apparent. When she openly admits a companionship with the dead by saying, "It is very odd you will think, *ma chere* . . . but I love very much to be near to the dead people-- in solitary place like this . . . I am not afraid of the dead people" she can effectively play on Maud's obvious discomfort with the cemetery and her own mother's death, and thus elicit enough fear to emphasize her control over the young girl. Madame needs to make the girl believe in her governess's erratic behavior, in order to instigate a fearful dependence. Additionally, in boasting of a connection with the supernatural world, Madame nods toward her self-professed power to pass between the two worlds, a feat that not only intensifies the fear that she provokes, but further likens her to a type of fiend who enjoys an intimacy with the dead. Madame calls Maud a "leetle mortal," a phrase that she has never used in reference to Maud, but one that allows her to highlight a significant difference between the governess and her charge. With this phrase, Madame attempts to show that her existence rests on a level much different from and more incomprehensible than Maud's. Here, she gives Maud a prelude to the performance that is yet to come. As we know, Madame cannot truly sense the dead's presence, thus this strategically timed display of morbid talent effectively frightens Maud and enables Madame to grasp Maud's complete attention. As Madame beckons to Maud she yells, "*Ah, ca ira, ca ira, ca ira!*" (41). Acting as conjurer and chanting what sounds, to Maud like unintelligible sounds, but what we know to be merely French, further distinguishes her from any former sane persona. As if playing upon what she knows are Maud's inherent childish prejudices against an unknown, Madame

utilizes the French language to capitalize on Maud's inability to understand or recognize the strange sounds. Thus, Madame's native language enables her to push herself even further from Maud's realm of normalcy, thus causing more fear. However, it is not until Madame gives herself a stage name calling herself "Madame la Morgue--Mrs. Deadhouse!" that we see the character herself choosing to intensify Maud's own perception (41). Jumping and yelling, the spectacle intensifies when Madame " utters a horrid yell from her enormous mouth, and pushing her wig and bonnet back, so as to show her great, bald head" she laughs and actually "looks quite mad" (42). With these actions, Madame becomes the performer-- very aware of her audience and the need for a desired response, and striving to evoke disbelief and shock. By pulling off her wig and revealing baldness, Madame incites Maud's shock and fear. Because she no longer resembles a woman fit for domestic duties, but makes herself look quite masculine, Madame illustrates her own deftness in taking on different roles.

Although Madame wants Maud to fear her supposed tendencies toward lunacy and irrationality, the way she performs this role suggests that she also intends Maud to recognize it as an act. If Maud understands that Madame acts in this way merely to frighten her, the situation really highlights how secure Madame is in her position over Maud. To have the ability to continuously frighten Maud gives Madame the upper hand because her actions are always spontaneous and unexpected. Maud knows that Madame's capabilities for deception are limitless, thus keeping the young girl at a constant disadvantage.

Madame's affinity for deception spectacle problematizes our understanding of her as having essential demonic traits. Although often clearly selfish, apathetic, and even violent, Madame is motivated chiefly by the need for information concerning Maud's father's will. She does not attack Maud out of irrational or illogical reasons, but only to motivate the child to give away information. In performing both the authentic governess and the threatening superior, Madame can easily force Maud's submissiveness, thus bringing Madame closer to her- as yet-undisclosed goal. That we do not understand what that goal truly is for most of the novel calls

into question an easy classification of Madame as one of Auerbach's demons, or as something inhuman and fiendish. In fact, viewing Madame as simply the fiendish villain overlooks her own victimization at the hands of both the other characters, narrator, and LeFanu himself.

Inventing the Villain

From the very beginning of the novel, Le Fanu makes no secret of the fear and horror Madame's appearance evokes in others. As Maud describes in her first view of Madame: "she was an odd figure—a very tall woman in gray draperies, nearly white under the moon, courtesy extraordinarily low, and rather fantastically" (24). These descriptions suggest not only a less than favorable appearance, but also liken Madame to the supernatural. In fact, Maud actually states that Madame reminds her of a "large-featured, smirking phantom." By characterizing Madame in this way, Maud immediately establishes her own status as the fearful, threatened angel, while insinuating that Madame elicits a distrustful and unsettling demeanor.

Therefore, if we return to several key passages, Madame begins to look more like the victim of the narrator's and other character's prejudices, instead of a horrific monstrosity. This idea gains credence when we take note of Maud's carefully contrived insinuations about Madame's ethnicity. For example, Maud likens the sound of Madame's speech to "gobbling and cackling shrilly," a dialect in which she could not tell "*what*" was articulated. (14). Although Maud's comment does not overtly attack Madame's French heritage, it does imply a sense of confusion and distaste for her vernacular speech that clearly exists outside of what she considers English normalcy. She links the French language with words that sound much like the terms associated with witches and goblins, clearly placing Madame in the realm of the unnatural and invoking fear of the unknown. Maud's disgust most likely stems from her sheltered and, to some extent, invalid lifestyle.

Having had no contact with a diverse world, Maud relies on her British maids to give her information, which subjects her to uneducated biases. For instance, Maud relays to the reader Mrs. Rusk's descriptions of every minute detail of Madame's behavior, which the maid always

finds disgusting and ill mannered. Mrs. Rusk prefaces each demeaning comment with her opinion concerning Frenchwomen in general: “I hate them Frenchwomen; they’re not natural . . . the great long nose and hollow cheeks of her, and oogh such a mouth . . . I felt like little Red Riding-Hood” (26). Mrs. Rusk complains that Madame’s skin tone and personality resemble an infamous predatory animal and immediately transfers doubt about Madame’s character not only to Maud, but also to the reader. Moreover, with her allusion to Little Red Riding-Hood, Mrs. Rusk characterizes herself as a victim, alluding to Madame’s potential threat to the angelic Maud. As a trusted confidant in such a remote area, Mrs. Rusk can easily persuade Maud to believe and take as fact her prejudices about Frenchwomen that she has seen and Maud has not. As if to assure herself that these women would obey societal conventions like the British, Mrs. Rusk seems frightened and concerned about Madame’s connections: “Where does she come from . . . is she a French or a Swiss one, or is she a Canada woman . . . I remember one of them when I was a girl, and a nice limb she was too!” (37-38). Here, Mrs. Rusk provides Maud with knowledge that the young girl does not possess herself. Mrs. Rusk’s use of the word “one” suggests that she instinctually classifies women with these heritages as less than human, operating from a level much lower than even her own working- class status. Although we cannot fault Maud for her own childish tendency to rashly believe Mrs. Rusk, the fact that Maud, years later, still includes the information that Mrs. Rusk offered without qualifying its possible prejudicial nature suggests that she still reads these biases as fact. Maud’s inclusion of this statement establishes not only her own vulnerability to such influences, but also enables the reader to see Maud’s limits as a reputable source.

Even when Maud clearly appears complacent and friendly with Madame, she must then clarify the reason behind such actions for the reader:

This confidential talking with Madame, strange to say, implied no confidence; it resulted from fear-- it was deprecatory. I treated her as if she had human sympathies, in the hope that they might be generated

somehow. (35).

Maud conveys a sense of confidentiality and subconscious trust in Madame, but then must immediately negate it. The narrator cannot lose her reader; she must sustain the reader's understanding and belief in Madame's capacity for evil. She overtly attempts to deny Madame's humanity by suggesting that the governess lacks all compassion. Her assurances to the reader that she talks with Madame intimately only to "generate" Madame's good nature conveys not that Madame's personality must be cold and heartless, but that she, the much more angelic figure, has the capacity and power for such emotions.

Such prejudices and strategic tactics against Madame raise questions about the validity of Maud's narrative as a whole. However, Mangum sees Madame as an example of the conventional villain who repeatedly threatens the safety of LeFanu's heroine. In fact, throughout her essay, Mangum describes Madame as untrustworthy, consistently implying that Madame epitomizes that conventionally feared governess who evolves into quite an archetype in the Victorian period. She sees Maud's narrative control of the story as the only agency in which "a minor, a child, and a female" has against the much more powerful and threatening Madame (225). Yet Mangum overlooks that Maud supposedly writes this story as a much older woman, thus no longer representing the endangered child. Furthermore, Maud's choices in describing Madame elevate Maud to more of an angelic, heroic position, illuminating perhaps her own self-serving purposes.

In addition to prejudicial statements, Maud takes her characterizations of Madame as the villain to the extreme when she describes troubling dreams, obvious fictional occurrences, in which Madame has the leading role. In the dreams, Madame leads Maud around the house "whispering something so very fast that [she] could not understand her, as if the two were a part of contraband practice" (38). Maud admits that, completely horrified, she turns a key, according to Madame's instruction, and finds her father inside the cabinet, who falls only after shouting the word "Dead." With the mention of this dream, Maud reveals her own fears about her father's

health and attempts to blame Madame for the possibility of her future loss. In addition, she wants to assign Madame an extreme amount of power, implying that the governess could, in fact, bring about the death of her father. This constructed power makes Madame much more threatening and frightening. Maud's choice to discuss such dreams not only hint at her own exaggerations, but also reveals this narrator's need to present Madame to the reader as a nightmarish figure.

Maud's use of persuasion comes in many forms, often surfacing in her speeches directed at the reader, in which she often pleads with them to understand and accept her story as truth. After her cousin Knollys's departure, Maud imparts a fear of the solitude at Knowl, which she admits does not specifically relate to Madame, but must still relay the *possibility* of impending danger.

Of Madame de la Rougierre I had nothing at first too particular to
remark. Only, reader, if you happen to be a rather nervous and
very young girl, I ask you to conceive my fears and imaginings,
and the kind of misery I was suffering (82).

This plea reveals Maud's need to further connect Madame with every feeling of discomfort, but also displays her intentions to target a young female audience. Maud's appeal to young girls associates her narrative with what only the young and innocent would believe. Furthering the possibility that her story is flawed and unreliable, Maud appears to prey on the immaturity and gullibility of a young audience in order to help prove her story.

Aside from Maud's unreliability as a narrator, we cannot overlook the possibility that Le Fanu has himself constructed for the reader an obviously unreliable narrator. For example, Maud openly admits that she bases certain evidence for this narrative on hearsay. On one occasion, Maud first gives an account of a situation that she actually witnesses, and then voices her intentions to fill in the missing information:

Three years later I learned- in a way she probably little expected,
and then did not much care about --what really occurred there. I

learned even phrases and looks--for the story was related by one who
had heard it told--and therefore I venture to narrate what at the moment
I neither saw nor suspected (42).

With this statement, Maud openly admits to using someone else's information, which makes way for the possibility of misstatements and fabrications. To further detract from her narrative, Maud never gives the "someone" a name and suggests that even *this* person relies on hearsay as well. Here, Le Fanu overtly shows that Maud discredits her own position as reliable, or at least hints at the possibility of unfair assumptions about Madame's character and involvement in the situation.

The conversation that Maud attributes to Madame is the one that assumedly takes place between the man we will eventually recognize as Uncle Silas's son, Dudley, and Madame at Church Scarsdale. According to Mangum, this scene in which Madame supposedly arranges for Dudley to offend Maud by ogling her, hints at Madame's previous employment as a "different type of Madam" (228). I would argue that although this implication exists, the source of the information is obviously skewed. Again, Maud blames Madame for endangering her safety. However, Maud's real problem with Madame surfaces from the way in which the governess threatens Maud's protected innocence. As the angelic, young woman, Maud would not be expected to understand or desire Dudley's indecorous advances. Consequently, Maud's fears concerning the loss of her own innocence reveals more about her own growing acknowledgement of her sexual self as well as Madame's confusing breaches of social rules and androgynous behavior.

Maud's insistent presentation of herself as Madame's victim actually sheds light on her own possible failings as the angelic figure in the novel. If Maud repeatedly desires the reader's pity and compassion for her situation, while working to achieve by presenting second-hand information as well as fictional daydreams as truth, then the narrator's own objectivity becomes suspect. Moreover, Maud begins very early in the novel to insist that the demonic is removed from a rational and moral position, thus establishing an opposition between Madame and, Maud

herself, who plays the angelic heroine. Maud's assessments of Madame's actions always characterize Madame as untrustworthy, oppressive, controlling, and often supernatural. Each assessment of Madame follows a reminder of Maud's own innocence or passivity, which traditionally comprise the traits of the angel. Yet, what we actually see in the much older Maud is a woman who, in trying to tell her story, compiles information that she either cannot remember correctly or has received from other biased sources. In fact, if we revisit the beginning of the novel, Maud's early characterizations of Madame as phantom-like when she first meets her, seem forced and contrived. As though Maud wants us from the beginning to view Madame as deceitful and ominous, she intertwines descriptions of Madame as fiendish and demonic, even before Madame has presented herself as less than moral or trustworthy. If Maud insists that the reader view her as angelic, then why does she need to convince us of such a character. Moreover, all we know of Maud is what she later tells us as an adult, a perception that we have already recognized as flawed and biased.

Madame's Actual Threat

In fact, the root of Maud's problems with Madame lie in the actual truths that Madame shares with Maud. The scene in which Maud first meets Dudley could work as an initiation of sorts for the young girl. In other words, Maud *could* potentially come to terms with Dudley's advances, thus seeing herself as having alluring qualities for the opposite sex. At the time, Maud as the protected young angel, does not seem to recognize herself as a sexual being. Therefore, Madame's so-called arrangement of such a meeting subjects Maud to an adult situation. Obviously frightened and resistant to such an "education," Maud must narrate the occurrence as much more threatening and sinister. Although we can assume that the scene functions as the first clue that Dudley, Madame, and Silas have worked together from the beginning, we know Maud admits that Madame and Dudley's conversation is based on hearsay. It is also just as possible, therefore, that when faced with such an imposing male, Maud must either face the fact that she possesses or will possess womanly desires, or mask this recognition through retelling the

situation as Dudley's and Madame's attempts to do her physical harm. By seeing Madame's actions as stemming from unexplainable viciousness, Maud can successfully ignore that Madame simply exposes her to realities of life. As the protected angelic, young maiden, Maud would never fully understand the implications of marriage and her mandated sexual role. As if still attempting to abide by these rules to keep such subjects hushed, Maud retells the scene while refusing to discuss what Dudley's actions and Madame's involvement in them insinuate about her own evolving adulthood. In trying to avoid facing this type of initiation, Maud strategically masks the substantiality of Madame's "threat," by continuously likening her to phantoms, ghosts, and fiends. Illusory and fleeting figures such as these never materialize into tangible menaces.

According to Terry Castle, this narrative tactic often surfaces in literature to negate lesbian undertones. While one would find it hard to prove that Madame displays homosexual tendencies, Le Fanu's narrator undermines the truth behind Madame's actions in quite the same way as narrators do with lesbian characters. In fact, the threat that Madame poses to the patriarchal order is comparable in several ways to the threat of lesbianism often poses. As Castle argues, "to be taken for a ghost is to be 'credited' with unnatural desires" (32). Madame presents a persona that does not coincide with what an androcentric culture would expect from a woman. Madame not only exhibits violence, but she also places the ideal maiden in less than favorable situations and showcases her agility in adopting opposing identities. She is as comfortable with feminine wiles and desires as showing off her very masculine eating habits and baldness. Furthermore, in claiming a married status only to assuage Lady Knollys' inquiries, Madame highlights that these assertions work as performances as well.

Madame, therefore, poses in a way that patriarchy finds not only unnatural but uncontrollable. Likewise, Castle suggests that "lesbianism poses an ineluctable challenge to the political, economic, and sexual authority of men over women . . . it implies a whole new social order, characterized--at the very least-- by a profound feminine indifference to masculine charisma" (62). If Madame subjects the angel as well as subjecting the angel to possible

“corruption” in order to call into question the validity of such classifications, Madame also defies the patriarchal order through a strategic androgyny that she embodies herself.

Authorial Negations:

Because Madame presents a persona that is not easily defined, she must meet with dire consequences—containment, neutralization, and eventually death. The most clearly identifiable mode of negation takes place upon Madame’s return in the third volume. For the first portion of the novel, Madame serves as the most immediate threat to Maud’s stability and safety. These so-called threats, however, surface in Madame’s defiance of femininity and the conventional governess role. While definitely not placing Madame in a favorable position, these performances and transgressions do, for a time, enable her to acquire an unusual amount of authority through her status as governess. Yet, upon the entrance of Uncle Silas, the *male* villain of the novel, Madame immediately loses her authoritative influence and begins to function as secondary to Maud’s new guardian. During this third volume, the reader learns of a possible previous arrangement between Madame and Uncle Silas. Although never confirmed, the pairing of the male and female villains at the end of the novel hints at Madame’s involvement with Silas from the very beginning. Not only does this give a purpose to Madame’s prior actions toward Maud and her father, but now Madame’s former successes in duping and maintaining the semblance of a frightening power seem to have really been orders from Uncle Silas. Therefore, her association with Uncle Silas actually demotes her, classifying her more as a pawn for a higher power. Even Maud’s descriptions of Madame, upon her return, offer more of a withered and decrepit feel to the once threatening villain: “She sat in a clumsy old arm-chair, with an ancient shawl about her, and her bare feet in a delft tub . . . she looked a thought more withered” (368). Madame still arises as a type of “phantom,” as Maud calls her, but more so because of her surprise return and not so much concerning her present appearance. A once sole formidable oppressor, Madame now looks haggard, her villainy muted.

From the very instant that Madame returns, it is obvious that she now has less freedom to make her own decisions. Silas now controls her actions, as well as encases her in an unused room, in which she is further stifled and seemingly cast aside. Maud actually appears to have recognized this demotion and attempts to define Madame's new status:

I never could quite understand why these Jezebels like to
insinuate the dreadful truth against themselves; but they do.
Is it the spirit of feminine triumph overcoming feminine shame,
and making them vaunt their fall as an evidence of bygone
fascination and existing power . . . Have not women preferred
hatred to indifference, and the reputation of witchcraft, with
all its penalties, to absolute insignificance? (392).

Maud's statement here has several purposes. Immediately it denotes the alteration in Madame's status as villain. Her association with Silas detracts from her power merely because of her femininity. Silas, functioning as the male, must occupy the more authoritative position. According to Maud, Madame must acknowledge the "dreadful truth" that she has to clear any type of action with her male counterpart. The much older Maud views Madame's compliance and subservience as natural and traditional. For Maud, the villainous woman must accept her demoted positions, because it is better to be hated and remembered than not to be remembered at all. In naming Madame a "Jezebel," Maud still views Madame as the villainous woman whose only importance lies within her villainy itself. Insinuating that she would classify Madame with other classic female transgressors such as witches highlights Maud's own insistence on negating Madame's true worth. Distinguishing herself from this category of female villain, Maud still fails to recognize what Madame potentially threatened. This statement, therefore, only reveals Maud's acknowledgement of Madame's former power, a power that she, however, defines as having its purpose in acquiring fame, or at the most recognition.

However, it is hard to understand how Madame's villainy and present situation as Uncle Silas's pawn will ever really acquire Madame a sense of important recognition. Uncle Silas's neutralization of Madame resonates in her expressed ignorance of Silas's and his son's plans:

You are a very secrete family, you Ruthyns, you are so coning; I
hate the coning people. By my faith I weel see Mr. Silas Ruthyn, and
ask wat he mean . . . He shall tell me everything (428).

Madame's ignorance here changes her image from victimizer to the victim. No longer orchestrating the plans, Madame's insignificance in the plot now shifts the focus to the dominant male. The very characteristics that gave Madame a sense of frightening irrationality, thus acquiring her ultimate authority over Maud, now present her as dangerous again, but only as a hindrance to Silas's plans for Maud's demise. Instead of eliciting fear through her unpredictable temper and tendency to drink, Madame's habits now threaten her own status as Silas's competent enforcer.

Because Madame's characteristics endanger Silas's plan, she eventually has no say in the designs against Maud, and begins to function as Maud's equal instead of oppressor. After Madame tricks Maud into thinking they have taken a trip to Dover, Silas completely extinguishes Madame's power. She no longer has any understanding of the plans or reasons why she must convince Maud that she resides in a Dover hotel, while actually keeping the young girl locked away in Silas's manor. In fact, Madame does not even understand the intended outcome of Silas's actions.

To further negate Madame's former powerful villainy, Le Fanu terminates this villainous woman in an accident of mistaken identity. An accident serves as the easiest way to rid the narrative of such a pesky woman who clearly transgresses conventions and endangers the innocence of the angel. Now, an example of muted villainy, Madame has no other purpose than to die a death that ultimately saves the angelic Maud. Therefore, Madame switches places with Maud in two important ways. While Dudley unknowingly murders Madame instead of Maud,

Madame also switches places with Maud metaphorically. That is, Madame becomes the victim in the end- - not Maud. Now Madame, an otherwise threatening villain and symbolic transgressor, dies in order to give precedence to patriarchy. Therefore, although the reader might notice Maud's shortcomings as an unreliable narrator, the villainous and transgressive woman commits a worse crime. In his choice for an ending, Le Fanu not only reestablishes the workings of patriarchy, but also successfully terminates the villainous woman's subversive actions. Thus, while Maud reveals her marriage and forces us to see her as the now angelic wife, Madame's anomalous performances find a resounding voice only if we acknowledge her haunting.

Chapter 3

Swinging the Hyphen Trapeze: Heart, Science, or Absurd?

In a modestly decorated study, several people gather to hear the reading of a will. This will not only details what a recently deceased relative has bequeathed to his surviving family, but also determines the fate of his young daughter Carmina. An older, distinguished woman, effeminately attired, makes her way into the room first and, as she enters the study, questions the lawyer about his notice of her remarkable plants. The woman credits their beauty and agility to her own keen understanding and obsessive study of botany. Although she overtly praises herself on her own progress in this science, one can't help but notice that while her mind exhibits masculine predilections, Mrs. Galilee comes to the study perfectly dressed in classic feminine apparel.

As she takes her seat, Mrs. Galilee cannot hide her excitement concerning the reading of the will. As the lawyer begins to read from the document, Mrs. Galilee asks him to "forget" certain members of the family and advises him to read only the portions that directly affect herself. While this interest portrays her selfishness, she strives to appear as though her main concern lies with the future of her orphaned niece. While clasping her son's hand and looking like she epitomizes maternal compassion, Mrs. Galilee's sporadic and quickly concealed expressions betray the mind and intentions of a woman with less than admirable pursuits, especially when she learns that she is to be Carmina's sole guardian. And, as the narrator intercedes, "if they had looked at Mrs. Galilee, when she was first aware of her position in the Will, they might have seen the incarnate Devil self revealed in a human face" (76). While obviously concerned about what she feels is her deserved reward, Mrs. Galilee begins asking questions about Carmina's inheritance, as the narrator alludes that Mrs. Galilee desires to capitalize on it. As the lawyer continues reading the will, Mrs. Galilee learns that as appointed guardian she has the power to approve or disapprove of Carmina's marriage offers. Mr Mool, the lawyer, makes it quite clear that this precaution allows one to safeguard Carmina's fortune from

suitors with their own objectives. Careful to contain her excitement about how she may benefit from Carmina's fortune, Mrs. Galilee happily learns that if Carmina never marries and/or leaves no children (either because of never marrying or in the case of death before her eighteenth birthday) she will inherit her niece's entire fortune.

This scene from Wilkie Collins's novel, *Heart and Science*, enables the reader to first perceive Mrs. Galilee as having both feminine and masculine characteristics. Mrs. Galilee comes into the study dressed to feminine perfection, thus insinuating that she is, in her fictional world, inherently feminine. However, as the reader will quickly notice, Mrs. Galilee also speaks of scientific matters and appears to have an anomalous amount of knowledge concerning botany. Thus, what the reader sees as Mrs. Galilee's "real" self in the narrative is what appears to be inherent masculinity. The reader's assumptions about Mrs. Galilee's "inherent" masculinity begin to solidify when the reader, much later in the novel, can perceive Mrs. Galilee's feminine attire and overt proclamations of feminine social competence as performances. Therefore, Mrs. Galilee's subsequent actions in the novel invite us to revisit the above scene and to notice that while her appearance coincides with the usual social code for females, what she outwardly expresses or speaks about her scientific interests tempts the reader to classify her as masculine.

Attempting to come to terms with a recognition of Mrs. Galilee as inherently masculine, the reader will note early that aside from what appears as a transgression of femininity into the world of science, Mrs. Galilee also commits acts that mark her as villainous. For example, the selected passage details the mind and future plans of a villainous, deceitful, and selfish woman. No one can doubt that as guardian of Carmina, Mrs. Galilee will do everything in her power to prevent her niece from ever acquiring her fortune. Not only do Mrs. Galilee's outward actions in this passage highlight villainous intentions, but when combined with the obvious masculine qualities, the reader might have difficulty in trying to categorize Mrs. Galilee as both masculine and villainous. In other words, Mrs. Galilee's simultaneous presence of both masculinity and villainy invites the question of whether or not her villainy stems from her scientific pursuits. In

fact, if we recognize Mrs. Galilee as performing feminine decorum, thus lacking inherent feminine qualities, while revealing what looks like inherent masculine traits, is it her lack of the feminine or the transgressive presence of scientific intellect in a woman which makes her villainous?

This question is further problematized when later in the novel the reader notices that Mrs. Galilee may also perform the *masculine* as well as the feminine. For instance, Mrs. Galilee strives for Mr. Mool's attentions concerning her scientific endeavors and makes no secrets about her interest in such subjects, often feeding off of the attention her knowledge affords her. Additionally, Mrs. Galilee never publicly appears without her feminine adornments and always portrays a sense of complete understanding concerning social manners and feminine pastimes. She often boasts of her beautiful table settings and other domestic abilities, endeavoring to look as though she understands and abides by social decorum for these "lesser" matters as well. Therefore, both personalities, seemingly opposite from one another, conflict with the reader's ability to understand Mrs. Galilee's place in either the feminine or masculine sphere. Moreover, the idea that she performs both suggests that perhaps she does not transgress from the feminine into the masculine sphere.

In further complicating what the reader attempts to recognize as true about Mrs. Galilee's character and her inherent self, an intrusive narrator intercedes to force us to see the presence of masculinity or villainy as a mask for the underlying devil. In fact, the narrator often deliberately reevaluates a scene so that the reader will see a demon lurking behind the more obvious actions of villainy. For example, in this scene the narrator intervenes and likens Mrs. Galilee to the devil incarnate. Relying heavily on scripture, he compares the look in her eyes to the writing on the wall, which told Belshazzar, king of the Chaldeans, of his impending death (76). The narrator then goes as far as to imagine what *could be* spoken by Mrs. Galilee. In her eyes and mannerisms, the narrator observes that Mrs. Galilee looks as if she is thinking: "See this woman, and know what I can do with her, when she has repelled her guardian angel, and her soul is left to ME" (76).

Here, the narrator references both an old protective guardianship and the new one between Carmina and Mrs. Galilee, which already looks threatening and endangering. This sentence, that Mrs. Galilee does not outwardly speak, but has attributed to her, works to convince the reader of her eventual abuse of power and her own selfish desires.

As opposed to the narrators of *Lady Audley's Secret* and *Uncle Silas*, who aligned the word demon with villain, Collins's narrator appears to force the reader into seeing the villain as unequal to the demon and insists that the demon is the "real" or inherent quality. This idea is further complicated when we look at how this demon compares to the female demons in the other two novels. Braddon and Le Fanu have assigned the description of demonic as almost a cliché of feminine transgression, making their villains fall into an either/or category (angel or demon) that solely applied to females. If the former demons were equal to villains, then Collins's narrator not only makes Mrs. Galilee's villainy look like a mask or performance, but also suggests that this demon is outside of the angel-demon binary altogether. Therefore, the male-female binary functions as an overarching dichotomy in which the angel-demon distinction is only applicable on the feminine side of the polarity.

The narrator's persistence in showing a different type of demon is further revealed in the way in which he often demonizes while simultaneously ridiculing. Therefore, in ridiculing, the narrator insinuates that Mrs. Galilee is not only a devilish figure, but also absurd. This narrative tactic still raises the question as to what the reader should perceive as the source of Mrs. Galilee's villainy. In fact, it seems as though the narrator and the reader are in constant tension because when the reader perceives what looks true for the character, the narrator intrudes to suggest that it is, in fact, a lie. For example, the reader sees a villainous woman who portrays scientific and rational thought, obviously lacks certain feminine characteristics such as maternal compassion and sensitivity, yet maintains feminine social decorum. At the same time, the narrator intertwines explicit demon imagery in order to force the reader to see that a devil is the true inherent quality, not the feminine or masculine. To further his negation of the masculine nature as "real," the

narrator begins to openly mock, berate, and reveal the performative nature of Mrs. Galilee's masculine character. In fact, the narrator often takes his descriptions to a level in which Mrs. Galilee not only looks ridiculous, but inhuman and incomprehensible. What look like attempts to chastise or negate Mrs. Galilee's achievements in science in fact align the narrator's construction of Mrs. Galilee's demonic traits with a place completely outside of the male-female dichotomy. I will explore below whether the obvious anxiety that Mrs. Galilee's character produces justifies the narrator's demonization of her, suggesting that perhaps to be incomprehensible is to be inhuman, unthinkable, and unworthy of classification.

To help explore Mrs. Galilee's equivocal nature, place, and/or absence from a rigid dichotomous order, French feminist Helene Cixous's theory of linguistic binaries proves applicable. According to Cixous, if one exits his/her pole then he/she would resonate on the other opposing side. For example, if a female exits her feminine sphere, then the only sphere into which she has to go is the masculine. So, it would seem that Mrs. Galilee's inherent lack of femininity and the obvious presence of scientific pursuits would signify a move from the feminine pole to the masculine sphere. Cixous, then, invites us to reexamine the ambiguity of Mrs. Galilee's character, both as the reader perceives her and the narrator constructs her. If Mrs. Galilee refuses the feminine, we would expect her to surface on the masculine side of the binary. However, if the feminine is already a role for her, then her refusal of the feminine is not a refusal of something inherent. Without a priori identification with the feminine, Mrs. Galilee's crossing over is itself a fiction, and we can no longer be certain of her location within the binary system or the cause of her villainy.

Together with her masculine and feminine characteristics and performances, Mrs. Galilee complicates another binary, one that governs Victorian society. Perhaps, her classification as a type of inhuman demon is a way for the author to overshadow or ignore a character who potentially threatens gendered restraints. However, I will also explore to what extent his very tactic of making her absurd and incomprehensible actually paves the way for the narrator to

replace her in the feminine sphere, thus capitalizing on conventional conceptions concerning a woman's innate illogical, irrational, and absurd nature. Does Collins's narrator then attempt to realign the two demons he originally separated? If so, for what reason, and to what extent did Mrs. Galilee become ultimately uncontrollable for her narrator.

The Obvious Villain

No one could doubt that both Mrs. Galilee's actions and what the reader perceives liken her to a villain. From the very beginning of the novel, when she learns of her role as Carmina's guardian and the terms by which she could procure the young girl's wealth, Mrs. Galilee plots and schemes to insure that the inheritance will come to her family. When she first notices her son Ovid's attachment to his cousin, Mrs. Galilee utilizes every tactic to separate and extinguish the budding love between the two. She resorts to attacking Carmina's Catholic heritage, and moralizes to Ovid about the social dangers of marrying one's cousin. As each tactic fails, Mrs. Galilee employs the help of Miss Minerva, a woman hopelessly in love with Ovid. Easily exploiting this young woman's attachment, Mrs. Galilee enlists her help in order to separate Ovid and Carmina. However, when all else fails, Mrs. Galilee feigns maternal intuition and concern for her son's well-being, applying to Carmina herself for aid in convincing Ovid that his health and their future depend upon his leaving the country. Thus, early in the narrative, Mrs. Galilee's achievement in distancing Carmina from Ovid brings her closer to keeping Carmina unmarried, and even closer to her desired objective. However, it is not until Carmina becomes ill and Mrs. Galilee truly realizes the bond between Carmina and her protectress, Teresa, that she must resort to another plot, which would ensure Carmina's death before the age of eighteen. During Carmina's illness, Teresa becomes suspicious and fearful of Mrs. Galilee's intentions, especially when the guardian employs Dr. Benjulia, an infamous non-humanist and scientist in vivisection, to minister Carmina's medical needs.

As readers, we are always aware of Mrs. Galilee's duplicity and underlying goals. After underhandedly separating the bonds between Teresa and Carmina, Mrs. Galilee attempts to

further extinguish Carmina's bonds with others when she tries to separate Teresa from her charge by enabling the music teacher to poison the older woman. With only good luck to account for a change in her plans, Mrs. Galilee does in fact get the chance to enjoy sole guardianship, when Teresa is called away due to her husband's illness. While Teresa is in Italy, the reader observes Mrs. Galilee not only attempting to cause Carmina's premature death, but going so far as to employ the help of Dr. Benjulia, who takes Carmina's case only to study and hopefully eventually dissect her living brain. These scenes paint a picture of malicious intent and shed an unfavorable light on any subsequent actions, personality traits, or pursuits, which may or may not be directly related to her main purpose. Mrs. Galilee's self-presentation, unlike the other female characters I have previously discussed, never contradicts the narrator's classification of herself as villainous. However, although the narrator might look as though he intervenes to reemphasize what we already know about Mrs. Galilee's potential for villainy, his intrusions into the narrative and early classifications of Mrs. Galilee as demonic are quite premature.

The Narrator Sees a Devil

As detailed in the opening scene, during the reading of the Will the narrator demonizes Mrs. Galilee by imagining that she has the power to bring about instantaneous death. Although a narrator's own imaginative wanderings may seem harmless here because Mrs. Galilee is presenting a self that appears potentially dangerous, detailing a scene and making certain allusions to events that never take place, demonizes the character. In this very early scene, the narrator includes a description of Mrs. Galilee's face, unnoticed by other characters, that ultimately leaves no room for the reader's own evaluation of her behavior. Therefore, what Mrs. Galilee outwardly expresses in no way warrants such a characterization; however, the narrator seems to want us to recognize, early on, the potential for the demonic. The narrator concludes that if the other characters could have looked at her as she realized her position in the will, "they might have read, in her eyes and on her lips, a warning hardly less fearful than the unearthly writing on the wall, which told the Eastern Monarch of his coming death" (76). Clearly, the

narrator speaks directly to the reader, forcing him or her to view what the other characters missed. The redundant use of the word “might” suggests a possibility of such a reaction, but does not speak of these facial expressions as materially present. However, the reader, left to the narrator’s own devices, really has no other information to go on and ultimately sees Mrs. Galilee as demonic and dangerous from the very beginning. The narrator likens her to the devil, but evokes fear in the possible power that she will hold over Carmina.

To continue maintaining the reader’s belief in Mrs. Galilee’s treachery and his evolving construction of her as demonic, the narrator does not just imagine hypothetical occurrences, but also includes his own judgements within her conversations. When Mrs. Galilee tries to obtain Miss Minerva’s alliance, while slyly trying to instigate jealousy in the governess’s growing friendship with Carmina, the narrator assesses this interaction for the reader’s benefit. In this key scene, Mrs. Galilee feels she must stop Miss Minerva from becoming close with Carmina. If she can isolate others from Carmina, then she can slyly gain more control over the young girl without anyone noticing her underlying goals. Completely aware of Miss Minerva’s attachment to Ovid, Mrs. Galilee achieves two things by telling Miss Minerva of her plan to get Ovid out of the country. First, she plays upon Miss Minerva’s compassion for Ovid’s health, which would naturally require Miss Minerva’s approval of Mrs. Galilee’s objective. Second, when she openly discloses to Miss Minerva that Carmina is fond of Ovid, she slyly plants the seeds of jealousy between the two women, thus hopefully gaining Miss Minerva’s support. After their conversation, which merely details Mrs. Galilee’s assumed concern for her son’s well-being and his resistance to her idea that he leave the country, Mrs. Galilee apologizes to Miss Minerva for involving her in the family’s problems. Although we could draw our own conclusions about Mrs. Galilee’s true objective in attempting to obtain Miss Minerva and Carmina’s support in sending Ovid away, the narrator evaluates the conversation for the reader: “It was cleverly done, but it laboured under one disadvantage . . . Miss Minerva had no idea of what the needless apology meant, having no suspicion of the discovery of her secret by her employer” (114). This needless

apology functions as Mrs. Galilee's one flaw in the plan because Miss Minerva has no idea that her employer knows about her feelings for Ovid. The narrator's judgement of Mrs. Galilee's plot to create tension between the two women proves more important than what she villainously intends. In criticizing Mrs. Galilee's plan, the narrator does not necessarily detract from his construction of her as villainous, but only shows that despite the threat she represents, she does exhibit moments of failure. "Unquestionably the most crafty and most cruel woman of the two," the narrator writes, "possessing the most dangerously deceitful manner, and the most mischievous readiness of language- -she was, nevertheless, Miss Minerva's inferior in the one supreme capacity of which they both stood in need, the capacity for self-restraint" (114). In fact, such a flaw might possibly put Carmina more at risk because it reveals Mrs. Galilee as someone who cannot control impulses, regardless of consequences.

Suggesting that self-restraint functions as Mrs. Galilee's one inferior attribute speaks more about Mrs. Galilee's lack of certain feminine qualities, which the narrator intends for the reader to view as a type of inhuman demon, instead of merely a transgressive villain. However, at the same time, the narrator often reminds the reader that Mrs. Galilee's failures in perfectly orchestrating a plan might result from her biological sex. For example, before the narrator examines what Mrs. Galilee says to Miss Minerva, he advises the reader to remember that even though she has a deftness in convincing people and formulating support, and has often converted professors to her way of thinking, "Mrs. Galilee was still only a woman" (114). Here, we see that the narrator's two commentaries contradict one another. While his evaluation of what she actually says to Miss Minerva suggests that she lacks the feminine virtue of restraint, his first comment before she even begins talking insinuates that her inability to practice self-restraint, thus ruining the plan, is a biological flaw.

These narrative intrusions begin to function in ways that assess more than just Mrs. Galilee's villainous behavior. As the narrator condemns Mrs. Galilee for what he sees as innate femininity, he simultaneously intrudes into her dialogue and thoughts in order to comment on her

lack of other conventionally prescribed feminine attributes such as compassion or maternity. In addition to complicating what the reader will understand as the narrator's assumptions and theories of femininity, the narrator ridicules Mrs. Galilee's involvement in science. Therefore, the narrator's belittling and often chastising comments begin to look as though they point to an incapacity to understand the woman who performs certain feminine qualities, thus highlighting her inherent lack, as well as performing masculine intellectual supremacy. In highlighting we see that even in the midst of her performances, Mrs. Galilee cannot achieve looking like an authentic example of domesticity or masculine intelligence. In addition, the narrator cannot let the reader forget that any demonization of maternal instinct or compassion masks a deeper more sinister personality.

In fact, this sinister personality begins to look quite inhuman. Early in the novel, the narrator assigns demonic qualities to Mrs. Galilee; however, this demonic persona does not resemble the female "demons" I have discussed in the former chapters. Despite Lady Audley's attempts at murder and arson, these actions not only are hidden from the reader's perspective, but seem like logical responses to extenuating circumstances, fear, and oppression. Moreover, while Braddon's narrator may intrude in order to guide the reader's perception of first an angel and then a demon, the demonic qualities assigned to Lady Audley do not take on the type of inhumanity that Mrs. Galilee's narrator insists we see in her. Instead, the narrator often compares Lady Audley to infamous literary and religious mythical female vixens and villains, thus appropriating the term "demon" as a type of *female* villain. Likewise, in Madame's case, the narrator intrudes to showcase the female who, like Lady Audley, performs a feminine role, but also one that is assigned demonic traits. Her villainy thus surfaces because we see a threatening, authoritative figure who abuses power and a feminine position in order to procure information for her real employer, Silas. We could say that Madame does, in fact, represent herself as fiendish and when we examine the narrative technique, we can clearly see Madame's witch-like behavior as a type of performance. Because Lady Audley and Madame try to stay within the boundaries of

conventional feminine roles, their performances of these roles make them understandable as villains. Therefore, when their narrators assign to them demonic qualities, we can assume that it is because they *perform* femininity, leaving the narrators to assign to them the opposite of what is angelic. The key here is that although this is a faulty classification, their demonic personas have more to do with the performance of feminine roles. In these cases, the demon is purely female, one who either performs the angelic or cannot for whatever reason be viewed as the essential angel.

Mrs. Galilee's character, however, effects a major shift in this logic. Collins's character problematizes the demon classification because she not only often performs domesticity, but also performs masculine reason and logic. Not only are we dealing with a completely different binary here, but also her transgression of gendered boundaries alters our understanding of her classification as a demon. In fact, if her character collapses the gendered linguistic system by which society is structured, then the narrator resorts to suggesting the incomprehensible or inhuman. Therefore, while the reader sees Mrs. Galilee's villainy surfacing in her endangerment of Carmina's life, it is really this underlying destabilizing of the male-female binary which warrants the narrator's characterization of her as this new type of demon. This position exists in an overarching hierarchy that ultimately removes her from a tangible and conceivable place.

With this in mind, we must consider to what extent the author's own devices and theories appear in Mrs. Galilee's characterizations and to what purpose. In his first preface to (what he deems) the "General Public," Collins suggests his main objective with this novel is to integrate a dramatic plot with well-developed characters and humor. Although he assures the general public that the main point of this novel is to illuminate the problems associated with scientific knowledge and specifically vivisection, he also accounts for the fact that he purposefully kept the public protected and hidden from the real crime and gross cruelty of his true goal. This secrecy surrounding the "real crime and gross cruelty" of his main point suggests that Collins may be pursuing another theme, primary to the cruelties of vivisection. However, Collins obviously

understands that the *general* public would either not be able to grasp his meaning, or would chastise him for what he set out to do, making a woman pursue science and take on a masculine persona. Thus, since the major portion of the novel details a woman's interests in science and her transgressions of femininity, the underlying main point rests with attention on this character's development. And as he suggests in the section directed to the more literary audience of the "Audience in Particular": "On becoming acquainted with Mrs. Galilee, you will find her talking--and you will sometimes even find the author talking--of scientific subjects in general" (39). Here, Collins actually admits to a specific public that he does, in fact, interfuse his own assessments of Mrs. Galilee within her dialogue. However, in the next few lines, Collins immediately amends this statement and assures his audience that "not a word of my own invention occurs, when Mrs. Gallilee turns the learned side of her character to your worships' view" (39). First, Collins wants his fellow literary peers to understand that he does not adhere to Mrs. Galilee's philosophies. It is almost impossible not to see his admonishment of Mrs. Galilee as a direct result of her scientific engagements. Furthermore, Collins never mentions Benjulia, who for the most part could serve as more of a focal point, if in fact Collins's main objective was to detail the cruelty of vivisection. Yet, in his preface, as in the novel, Collins not only hints at anxiety concerning the reception of such a complicated feminine character, but also reveals his own fears that he will be misunderstood.

Second, and most important, Collins assures his audience that Mrs. Galilee's exhibition of masculine knowledge does not stem from his own invention. This implies that the text itself and/or the construction of Mrs. Galilee becomes uncontrollable for the narrator, thus fissures and complications arise that the narrator assumedly never anticipated. However, perhaps Collins uses such a disclaimer only to safeguard his own reputation in endeavoring to construct such a vexed feminine character who must be seen as inhuman because performances break down a rigid system of order.

Balancing on the Hyphen

Our first formal introduction to Mrs. Galilee's masculine qualities comes from her son, Ovid, while at a concert. His thoughts exhibit his own fears and sense of inferiority to his mother's keen intellect. In fact, Ovid appears truly frightened of his mother's watchful presence: "with her quickness of apprehension what might she not suspect, if she found him among the audience?" (59). Ovid assigns his mother a powerful sense of intuition, but this instinct seems to fall short of clemency and evoke fear instead. The "quickness of apprehension" actually highlights more of an unfounded intellect, rather than a mother's knowledge and care. Therefore, this intellect appears masculine in nature and thereby elicits more fear when portrayed in a woman. When Mrs. Galilee intercepts Ovid's revealing gaze toward Carmina, the immediacy of his fears reveals his complete understanding of her attitude toward other females and her tendency to demand control in every situation. At this point, Mrs. Galilee has no idea that Carmina is actually her niece. Ovid does not know either, but overtly expresses an aversion to his mother recognizing any type of romantic interest in the young girl. Ovid's mind then begins to wander to his mother's opinions of other females, when she disapproves of their actions: "she could insult another woman (and safely disguise it) by an inquiring look" (59). Here, the narrator intends for the reader to observe Ovid placing his mother in an all-knowing position. If she has the ability to evaluate other women, then Mrs. Galilee is equipped with a keener sense.

Aside from recognizing an astounding masculine intellect, the reader will also notice that Mrs. Galilee often simultaneously presents herself as quite feminine. Upon her entrance into the concert hall, the narrator describes her as having a "striking entrance Dressed to perfection powdered and painted to perfection" (59). The redundant use of the word "perfection" not only leads the reader to believe that Mrs. Galilee takes great pains to appear appropriate, but also suggests contrivance and unnaturalness associated with perfection. The idea that she "powders and paints" herself to an assumed or outward perfection detracts from an inherent sense of femininity and instead makes her appear more like an actress on stage. With this description of

her as an example of femininity, the narrator immediately follows it with an example of her masculine knowledge. On the way in, an usher begins to show Mrs. Galilee to her seat; however, she stops him and “astonishes him by a little lecture on acoustics,” but does so with the “sweetest condescension” (59). The fact that she would astonish the male usher with her knowledge nods toward her capacity to discuss from a male point of view; however, she makes these intellectual comments with the voice and demeanor of a conventional woman. The narrator continues this duality by suggesting that her “Christian humility smiled” and she acknowledged the usher as “Sir”(59). With this statement, the narrator succeeds in distinguishing certain qualities from her sense of humility or fellow compassion. Although she keeps up the pretenses of respectfully addressing a man as sir, she interfuses this conventional response of respect with relaying knowledge that the usher obviously does not have, thus representing her intentions to always look like the socially acceptable female. Therefore, she must also have a knowledge of feminine thought, wiles, desires, and what her culture deems women would think. In addition, if we look again at the first example it may seem as though Ovid actually marks a very feminine characteristic in his mother; however, the inclusion of the parenthetical information seems like an overlapping of Ovid’s attributed thoughts and the narrator’s own narrative. If so, the concept of a disguise clearly suggests a type of role-playing. Here, the goal is to remain effeminately poised in the presence of another female who portrays characteristics counter to or threatening to Mrs. Galilee’s own objectives.

While the narrator insists that the reader recognize Mrs. Galilee’s performances of prescribed femininity, other characters also aid him in revealing Mrs. Galilee’s moments of weakness and passivity as an act. Miss Minerva details an event at the orchestra in which she deems Mrs. Galilee’s behavior “theatrical.” She explains to Mr. Le Frank, the music teacher, about Carmina’s fainting episode. Finding it ultimately important to make known to Mr. Le Frank Mrs. Galilee’s reaction to such a situation, Miss Minerva recounts that Mrs. Galilee produced the smelling salts first and had the “presence of mind to suggest ‘Help the heart . . . don’t impede it’”

(62). Miss Minerva clearly portrays Mrs. Galilee as medically competent to Mr. Le Frank, an intelligence usually dominated by males. However, Miss Minerva concludes “that in another moment Mrs. Galilee herself stood in need of the smelling-bottle,” but her “strength of mind . . . resisted the shock” (62). This scene first shows Mrs. Galilee reacting to a situation in a traditionally effeminate way, but then she exhibits that her intellect can control an episode of fainting. On the other hand, the act of fainting, traditionally an exclusively feminine response, could be effectively role-played, especially if Mrs. Galilee would want to attract more attention to the fact that she can maintain and control what is conventionally considered “natural” feminine impulse. Miss Minerva apparently respects Mrs. Galilee’s sense of knowledge, but also intends to hint at her deftness in role-playing.

While it might seem that because she performs certain feminine behaviors Mrs. Galilee would desire others to always recognize her as ultimately feminine, she actually never talks of feminine pastimes or roles without a hint of contempt or disgust. Therefore, although she often performs femininity she does so with a complete understanding of the female role’s insignificance and limitations. While speaking with Ovid concerning the reading of Carmina’s father’s will, Mrs. Galilee taunts Ovid by displacing onto him the femininity she so desperately detests: “What a boy you are, in some things . . . Have you been reading a novel lately”(69). Here, Mrs. Galilee accuses Ovid of a feminine pastime, while also categorizing such an activity as frivolous and silly. Her insistence on calling Ovid a “boy” not only demotes him from a level of maturity, but also suggests that femininity is itself childish and unrefined.

Although she often performs maternal compassion, and a social conscience of feminine manners, Mrs. Galilee tends to find fault with these same characteristics in others. Her aversion to passivity surfaces in her relationship with Carmina, which serves to strengthen the reader’s perception of an underlying contempt for the young niece. After admitting to herself that Carmina might pose more of a problem for Mrs. Galilee than what she first imagined, Mrs. Galilee comes to the conclusion that only through Carmina will she succeed in controlling Ovid

and effectively keep the two apart, thus possibly reaping rewards from Carmina's unmarried status. She requests her niece's presence in her boudoir and questions her on the types of books she reads. Mrs. Galilee's elevation of science over trivialities becomes quite obvious when she admonishes Carmina for selecting books based on appearance instead of content: "Science again, my dear . . . inviting you in a pretty dress" (111). The sarcastic nature of such a comment reveals how Mrs. Galilee views a distinct difference between the scientific world and a world supposedly consumed by trifles, compassion, and passivity. A pretty dress has no place in the world of science, but the remark also emphasizes the intellectual level to which Mrs. Galilee has unusual access, while Carmina can never reach such a level. Furthermore, the mention of science enticing someone in a pretty dress might actually extend to a physical dress or ladies' fashion and not just a book's bindings. In this case, the comment suggests Mrs. Galilee's attempts to show how women, invoked by the metonym "dresses," could succumb to Science's power and enticement. According to the narrator, however, Mrs. Galilee clearly does not refrain from marking her own uniqueness in such an endeavor, implying that she alone breaks free from the limits of femininity. The narrator even suggests that Mrs. Galilee has to "come down to Carmina's level" in order to instruct her on the meaning of the book. She then slyly pokes fun at Carmina's decision to read something other than scientific texts. Here, Mrs. Galilee clearly associates feminine nature with frivolity and simplicity.

If this negation and undermining of feminine potentiality actually does define an inherent disgust for her own feminine nature, then Mrs. Galilee's role-playing of conventions proves even more problematic. Why then does she continue to present herself in a feminine way, if in fact she despises the nature itself? While continuing this conversation with Carmina, Mrs. Galilee does hint at an ideological force, pushing her and other possible females in an acceptable societal path. When Carmina asks her aunt if she has selected the piano in her room, and if she enjoys music, Mrs. Galilee, again, appears exasperated with her niece's generalizations concerning societal norms. She answers, "When you see a little more of society, my child, you will know that one

must like music So again with pictures one *must* go to the Royal Academy Exhibition”

(112). Mrs. Galilee affirms to Carmina that a woman must keep up pretenses and that there exists forceful expectations upon women to enact certain roles. The key here is that Mrs. Galilee instructs Carmina that this conscious role-playing always takes place, initiating the idea that one can never really define a woman’s essential qualities. However, she still insinuates that Carmina may never realize such societal forces, limitations, or the impossibility of classifying a woman’s inherent nature, suggesting that she herself holds that knowledge, which resonates as an anomaly.

Just when we would think that she performs femininity because she has certain masculine qualities, Mrs. Galilee reveals that she, in fact, performs certain masculine roles as well.

Throughout the novel, the narrator suggests that she puts on masks, one that is feminine and one that is masculine depending on her audience. If we reexamine certain scenes, we find that Mrs. Galilee often overtly expresses that her persona is made up of a conglomeration of performances. In one such conversation with Miss Minerva, after Mrs. Galilee has achieved her goal of convincing Ovid to journey abroad, the woman beckons her servant to accompany her in the celebration of her success. She entices Miss Minerva by suggesting, “Let us imitate the men, Miss Minerva, and drink a toast before we go to bed” (128). Here, we find Mrs. Galilee admitting that she can imitate the men, but also suggesting that she *has* to imitate what is a natural routine for the men. In fact, immediately following this phrase, Mrs. Galilee embarks on a rampage about the geology of the Dominion and the water waste at Niagara Falls. Although these topic choices for conversation seem commonplace for Mrs. Galilee, she does begin this type of diatribe immediately following a proclamation that she is imitating the men. Therefore, Mrs. Galilee exposes that although she might be able to discuss science with the most intelligent of men, her masculine-like interests might actually be working much like performances as well.

Collins’s narrator presents us with Mrs. Galilee’s effective role-playing and obvious knowledge of societal conventions only after he intertwines descriptions of feminine achievements with villainous behavior. For example, in one of the first scenes with Ovid, we, as

readers, know that Mrs. Galilee's real goal is to effect a separation between Ovid and Carmina. What we actually view her saying to Ovid, if we could disregard narration, appears as sincere maternal affection: "You ought to think seriously of change of air and scene Get away somewhere, my dear, for your own sake" (89). While appealing to Ovid's own medical knowledge, Mrs. Galilee can slyly roleplay a legitimate concern for her son's life. Another example of role-playing and negation of Mrs. Galilee's destruction of gender takes place when Ovid does agree to go away on the prescribed journey. Mrs. Galilee previously has upset Carmina, but at the moment, when we know as readers that she has reached her primary goal, she turns to Carmina and expresses gratitude and compassionate thanksgiving for Carmina's help in Ovid's decision. "You little goose," Mrs. Galilee says to Carmina, "how could you suppose I was angry with you . . . I can't even regret your mistake you have written such a charming note" (126). The endearing comment of "little goose" and the obvious change in demeanor toward the young woman exhibits the successful role-playing.

Although Mrs. Galilee's role-playing usually puts her in an authoritative position either as a guru for running a household and domestic affairs, or winning an intellectual battle in the science field, there are times when she also feigns the more docile, simple-minded and naive stereotypes of femininity. This shift in her role-playing works as a strategy to play upon the limitations of feminine thought and reason, when necessary. For example, upon Ovid's departure, Mrs. Galilee speaks privately with her son concerning the termination of his relationship with Carmina. After Ovid asks his mother why she cannot sanction a union between him and Carmina, Mrs. Galilee acts as though she has no idea about the occasion to which Ovid refers. She then uses traditional feminine innocence to suggest: "Can women always give their reasons?" (135) With this question, Mrs. Galilee assumes that Ovid would naturally conceive that women do not always use logic to propel their reasoning. This comment also works in her favor because it cleverly redirects Ovid's attention away from his mother's possible powerful and less than admirable intentions toward Carmina, and refocuses the attention on her assumed maternal

compassion. In order to solidify Ovid's belief in her claims, Mrs. Galilee assures Ovid that Carmina has assumedly "conquered her," and suggests that although Ovid feels her statement sounds cold, she says it "truly" (135). Immediately following her admission of devotion to Carmina, Mrs. Galilee assumes the persona of a caring mother figure for not only Ovid, but for Carmina as well. She lovingly caresses her son, assuaging his fears by reassuring him that her "dead brother's child is her [my] child" (136). Mrs. Galilee's insistence on using the word "my" has many meanings. First, it helps to make her speech look more authentic. Second Mrs. Galilee can assert the ultimate control her guardianship gives her. Ovid's request that his mother remain nice and hospitable to Carmina during his absence projects his concerns for any girl who does not receive favor from his mother, making Mrs. Galilee seem even more threatening to Carmina's safety.

A Push into the Absurd

As we have seen, the narrator not only evaluates and judges Mrs. Galilee's conversations, but also works to demonize the character who performs both compassion and reason. These tactics, which constantly remind the reader of Mrs. Galilee's less than moral intentions and assumed evil behavior, begin to negate any possibility of the reader recognizing the implications of Mrs. Galilee's transgressions out of the male-female binary. To intensify this undermining of Mrs. Galilee's intellectual pursuits, the narrator uses a type of comedic tactic to highlight the absurdity of such a female character. In one of the best examples of this technique, the narrator follows up Mrs. Galilee's first conversation with Carmina about socially acceptable music for females with the contents of a letter, which details a very scientific matter:

I knew it . . . I have always maintained that the albuminoid substance of frog's eggs is insufficient (viewed as nourishment) to transform a tadpole into a frog- and at last, the Professor owns that I am right. (113)

The placement of this statement, which follows Mrs. Galilee's instructions for Carmina on social conventions for women, obviously belittles the gratification of intellectualism for her sex. It

seems only funny and ludicrous that anyone would find such an endeavor worthwhile or important. Her discussion of women having to accept social norms and outwardly profess a love or appreciation for music takes greater precedence over an educational success. The narrator highlights the significance and importance of the safe subjects of domesticity and finds that any woman outside of these simple endeavors ridiculous. Furthermore, the addition of the parenthetical information again highlights the narrator's ability to speak directly to the audience and fill in missing facts. This narrative intrusion succeeds in boasting the same knowledge that Mrs. Galilee has, thereby suggesting a shared sense of scientific intelligence. However, if we assume that we are to accept the omniscient narrator as Collins, it seems as though he abbreviates the woman's success by poking fun, but suggests that a male's scientific knowledge remains acceptable.

Mrs. Galilee's subjugation at the hands of the narrator becomes even more intensely satirical and leveling when, learning of Mr. Le Frank's plan, Mrs. Galilee must try to occupy her mind with science as opposed to the impending failure of her music teacher's impetuosity. The narrator steps in, and instead of explaining Mrs. Galilee's thoughts, he actually appears to lead her in each subsequent action. The narrator speaks directly to Mrs. Galilee: "Look at your library table, learned lady, and take the appropriate means of relief that it offers . . . See the lively modern parasites that infest Science, eager to invite your attention to their little crawling selves" (286). Although the narrator seems to give advice here, these statements function more like criticism than a recommendation for suitable behavior. As the instructions continue, the narrator not only obviously pokes fun at Mrs. Galilee's choices of a diversion, but also makes an interesting statement about science and its male dominance in general. The narrator suggests that Mrs. Galilee "follow scientific inquiry, rushing into print to proclaim its own importance, and to declare any human being, who ventures to doubt or differ a fanatic or a fool" (286). Here, the narrator actually belittles and chastises the science world for hurriedly pushing into print theories and philosophies that, by their very nature, according to the narrator, offend and contradict public

opinion. The narrator's intention in showing the way scientists assumedly treat this common public operates as not only a stab against the scientist and the unwarranted, inflated ego, but also an appeal to the common public, or to the general readers of Collins's novels. Collins's narrator goes as far as to implicitly suggest that the scientific sphere or discourse reside entirely with men. Since we know that the narrator focuses this commentary on Mrs. Galilee, the singling out of men effectively highlights Mrs. Galilee's unfounded transgression, while simultaneously undermining and reprimanding her for such a venture. "Absorb your mind in controversies and discussions," the narrator writes, "in which Mr. Always Right and Mr. Never Wrong exhibit the natural tendency of man to believe in himself, in the most rampant stage of development that the world has yet seen" (286). Here, the narrator plainly places Mrs. Galilee in a place in which she conventionally does not belong. The inclusion of the surname of "mister" bars Mrs. Galilee from ever really succeeding in this field. As Collins's narrator clarifies that science and theory constantly change, he not only speaks out about the limited validity or "fashionableness" of the field, but also indicates that in every new theory or endeavor there resonates a hint of futility. The narrator's commentary or assumed instructions take on the quality of a diatribe, especially when the reader realizes that these statements do not give an actual overview of the character's actions. This narrative intrusion only speculates in order to demean the woman who would engage in such an activity.

Out of the Binary Altogether?

Although Mrs. Galilee never proposes a distinctively different persona from the one assigned to her, Collins's narrator likens Mrs. Galilee to something completely foreign from humanity. In addition, by establishing the compassionate, maternal, protective, and/or angelic characteristics of other characters, especially Teresa, Collins lends authenticity and value to their fears of Mrs. Galilee. Teresa refers to Mrs. Galilee as the "Evil Eye." By obviously exhibiting characteristics that prove Teresa serves as the better guardian than Mrs. Galilee. A hierarchy develops in which Mrs. Galilee functions on a lower level than either Teresa or Carmina.

Furthermore, Mrs. Galilee's attempt to prove Carmina's illegitimacy precedes an altercation between the two women vying for Carmina's guardianship. Immediately before the physical reactions between the two women takes place, the narrator describes the thought processes of Mrs. Galilee as she reveals Carmina's assumed parentage: "She was in no position to see them: she was incapable of hearing them The demon in her urged her on" (249). The narrator, of course, already lends his/her estimation of Mrs. Galilee's actions to the reader. Her incapability to hear or see, suggests that she is somehow possessed with a demon. Moreover, we are not completely sure that the narrator is referencing an angel-demon hierarchy here, one that would solely define women, but rather focusing on persuading readers to see her as inhuman. With this classification, Mrs. Galilee's character appears to surface in category that because it does not function as equal to villain, must exist in a binary overarching even the male-female binary. Not for long can we view Mrs. Galilee as just a selfish woman who enjoys masculine pursuits. Instead, we see the narrator strategically prefacing and/or disclaiming every action and phrase with the insinuation that it stems from the demonic purposes. Conversely, although Teresa may function quite similarly to Mrs. Galilee in her obsession with Carmina and her intense capacity for hatred, she does not drop in the reader's estimation. Her actions seem sanctioned because she ultimately still represents the conventional maternity and loyalty considered essential to femininity, while protecting the weak, passive, and naive angel.

In fact, the authorial construction of Teresa and Carmina as compassionate actually works to authenticate and further solidify the narrator's classifications of Mrs. Galilee as less than human. In one particularly poignant scene, when Mrs. Galilee fully recognizes that Carmina has come to fear her, she enters the room and Carmina sees her as a ghost. The narrator writes, "Mrs. Galilee suddenly entered the room she opened the door so softly, that she took them both by surprise To Carmina's excited imagination, she glided into their presence like a ghost" (248). Transforming Mrs. Galilee into an apparition implies that she is not only intangible and illusive, thus supernatural and incapable of being grasped and/or understood. The attempt here

might be to lessen the danger of her actions; however, the narrator describes her as gliding into a room and startling the two women, suggesting that she actually haunts them. Haunting indicates that she remains as a constant reminder, thus suggesting that she makes them remember not only her as a threat, but also as the unwomanly woman whose actions are clearly indefinable.

Furthermore, as Mrs. Galilee makes her way into the room, the narrator calls attention to her cracked face paint, which reveals the “furrowed brows and wrinkles underneath” (248). Here, Mrs. Galilee’s described appearance implies that as she enters the room in anger, her disguises fall away and what we are left with is the fiendish, ghostlike, demon who eventually attacks Teresa. Interestingly, when all pretence fade away, the narrator never attempts to give any logical explanation or assign a reasonable defining term to the woman who exceeds all boundaries of gender, but rather always resorts to the classification of demon or devil. The narrator’s reliance on defining Mrs. Galilee as demonic reveals his failure to effectively categorize her as masculine or feminine; therefore, he must show her as something inhuman that cannot be efficiently described.

Although Collins employs a biased and unreliable narrator, he actually creates a character who through her role-playing of maternal instinct and compassion as well as her role-playing of masculinity, deconstructs the definition of essential womanhood. For Helene Cixous, our world functions at the behest of linguistic oppositions: “Always the same metaphor: we follow it, it carries us, beneath all its figures, wherever discourse is organized” (Cixous 63). The propelling question throughout Cixous’ work is her attempt to designate woman’s place within the binaries. By starting with the question: “Where is she?” Cixous places females, as deemed by a patriarchal society, on the weaker more passive side of the oppositions. She arranges several binaries such as: Activity/Passivity, Head/Heart, and Logos/Pathos, while placing them beside the more obvious opposites of man/woman, father/mother, and culture/nature. According to Cixous, logocentrism “subjects thought--all concepts, codes and values- to a binary system, related to ‘the’ couple, man/woman” (64). Cixous furthers this example by suggesting that at any point,

when inquiries question authority, agency, or desire “one is led back to the father.” Because these traits are always associated with him, the woman is completely absent from any discussion concerning reason, logic, or power. Furthermore, the woman, “if not found passive,” completely disappears from the binary, thus having no distinct place. Cixous does account for the possibility of a female who does not seem passive, but she concludes that such a woman’s place is unthinkable. Therefore, the effect of this lack of space on the male or “father” eclipses the woman’s transgression. As noted in my previous analysis, Collins spends a great part of the time portraying the effects on the other characters, specifically Mr. Galilee and the children, that Mrs. Galilee’s performances incur. Collins, thus, effectively distracts the attention away from what Mrs. Galilee’s character actually does and refocuses on the fear of not having a concise definition, which he remedies by portraying her as absurd or inhuman. As Cixous writes, “The paradox of otherness is that, of course, at no moment in History is it tolerated or possible as such . . . the other is there only to be reappropriated, recaptured, and destroyed as other” (71). Collins’s attempts to define Mrs. Galilee result in placing her in a realm that he wants the reader to see as incomprehensible, thus punishable and worth negating to restore order. In fact, the ending of Collins’s novel works to highlight this attempt at restoration of andocentric order. Mrs. Galilee’s plans are thwarted and Carmina’s life is saved only so that the novel can end with a clichéd marriage. Despite the fact that Mrs. Galilee is left to further her scientific pursuits, the narrator leaves us with words that continue his placement of her in a ridiculous realm:

Mrs. Galilee was At Home to Science. The Professors of the civilised universe rallied around their fair friend. France, Italy, Germany bewildered the announcing servants with a Babel of names . . . and when Science went home . . . Mrs. Galilee set down in the empty room, and said to the learned friend who lived with her, At last I’m a happy woman! (327).

The narrator suggests that even the professors of Science had names that likened them to the Biblical allusion of the Tower of Babel, in which God supposedly punished ongoing dissonance with unintelligible speech. The implication here is that scientific language is not easily accessible to the public, thus it is something to distrust. The narrator goes on to suggest that Science leaves Mrs. Galilee, likening it to a type of friend or possession that comes and goes, which furthers its comparison to a performance or mask, which she dons if necessary. The last line of the novel comes as no surprise because Mrs. Galilee, without the influence of Science, calls herself a woman. However, she says that she is now a happy woman without the normal, conventional bindings of marital life and motherhood. Yet, although she is “happy” when left to her own devices, she still seems to lack conventional feminine traits, and still performs the scientific knowledge. Although his purpose with this phrase may be strategically hidden, Collins’s narrator does include information just prior to this statement that Mrs. Galilee will receive an allowance from her son Ovid. This exchange of money from the son to the mother also reestablishes the hierarchy because Mrs. Galilee is dependent upon a male benefactor.

In fact, it seems as though patriarchal order is restored completely and effectively at the end of the novel. However, the way in which the narrator orchestrates the order might actually allude not only to his exasperation and fear of such a character, but also to the way he finds to sufficiently replace her in the binary. If we revisit a few examples, we will see that the narrator often implies, early on, that this is his only safety route out of otherwise having to admit to something existing outside of the rigid androcentric ordered binaries. In the example in which the narrator judges Mrs. Galilee’s tactics in acquiring the help of Miss Minerva, he states that her inability to control impulses, something that might at first place her outside of rational order, is really a biological flaw, thus inherently tied to her femininity. Yet, although it seems as though the narrator has insisted that Mrs. Galilee is inhuman and inherently a devil, making sure that he distinguishes between demon and villain, he now re-equates his devil and the demon that is synonymous with villain through an interesting loophole. After realizing that the character is

completely uncontrollable, the narrator must replace her in the realm of femininity. He can do this by subtly suggesting in key scenes that the irrationality and incomprehensibility of this inhuman demon, is really quite comparable to conventional thought about females in general. What is illogical, irrational, and unexplainable does function as an opposite to the male side of the binary that boasts of rational and logical thought. Yet While the attempt to restore the male hierarchy might seem as though it effectively works, if we recognize the way in which Mrs. Galilee becomes uncontrollable for her narrator, then she has still called into question the logic of “otherness.” How can we categorize her essentialness if she is neither purely feminine nor masculine?

To answer this ongoing question concerning the slippery definitions of otherness, Cixous does imagine a universe in which feminine and masculine roles will become easily interchangeable or disintegrate altogether. In appropriating this possibility, Cixous, redefines the term “bisexuality.” Working to deconstruct old terminology, Cixous suggests that one way to look at bisexuality is to envision a “fantasy of a complete being, which replaces the fear of castration and veils sexual difference insofar as this is perceived as the mark of a mythical separation” (84). In other words, Cixous anticipates the acceptance of a bisexual being, one in which the biological lack is no longer an issue that orchestrates separation between genders. She then opposes this latter definition with another one in which every subject “who is not shut up inside the spurious Phallogentric Performing Theater, sets up his or her erotic universe . . . bisexuality-- that is to say the location within oneself of the presence of both sexes” (85). Cixous applies these definitions to women because they internalize and often become obsessed by what a phallic inclined society elevates and their own lacking of it, as well as their femininity. Mrs. Galilee may seem as though she falls in this realm of a woman who encompasses both femininity and masculinity. She clearly maintains some feminine traits, as well as pursuing the phallogentric world of Science. However, we cannot forget that Mrs. Galilee appears to roleplay several of

these feminine traits, suggesting that conventional femininity does not exist as an inherent quality.

If Mrs. Galilee roleplays both femininity and masculinity, then it is significant to point out that she does not exist as either one, eliminating the possibility that she existed on either side. Cixous' binary depends upon the notion that beings are either feminine or masculine. Although her definition for bisexuality prescribes a woman or man sustaining both sexes, it is also dependent upon each identifying with a particular gender. Most importantly, it seems as though Cixous, although trying to eliminate a cultural dependence on essentialism, still relies on it. Mrs. Galilee highlights the performance of both genders, suggesting that ultimately nothing is inherent.

Conclusion

What I have attempted to do throughout this entire thesis is examine how fictional Victorian women, and especially female villains, have operated within the confining binary of angel-demon. In an effort to study the essentialist methods and strategies of narrators in sensation fiction, I actually realized that the characters themselves might be working against the phallogentric dichotomy that limits them to one of two extremes. While closely examining the strategic plots and tensions between characters and narrators, I noticed that the characters' self-representation often works against the construction of the demonic villains or inhuman fiends their narrators want readers to perceive. In fact, in *Heart and Science* the narrator appears to lose complete control over Mrs. Galilee, who calls into question ordered systems.

Ironically, it is Collins's narrator who first *enables* Mrs. Galilee to step outside of conventional and logical confines. For example, each time the reader begins to grasp the source of Mrs. Galilee's villainy, the narrator intrudes only to inform the reader that what he or she believes to be "real" is, in fact, a fiction or mask, and that the villainy (deceit and selfishness) only masks something more demonic and inhuman. When the reader observes the presence of masculinity as a possible source of Mrs. Galilee's villainous behavior, the narrator simultaneously mocks and ridicules Mrs. Galilee's scientific pursuits, affirming that the masculinity is merely a performance, while again attempting to force the reader to see the demonic beneath the performance. As the novel continues, however, the demon that the narrator wants the reader to recognize begins to defy *all* logic because it does not seem to function within the terms of binary opposition. That is, the perceived villainy and masculinity of the demon are radically called into question. Moreover, when the reader recognizes Mrs. Galilee's motherliness as a performance and possible source of villainy, the former pattern the narrator establishes (negating and showing that the reader's former convictions are fictions) implies that the narrator would intercede to affirm that the *performance* of femininity, what the reader has noticed, is also a fiction. The

dilemma for the narrator begins with his insistent construction of his character as an inhuman demon which pushes her into an absurd realm that is completely incomprehensible. Inadvertently, however, the narrator's construction must recognize her as a character who is "inherently" feminine or masculine, that is, a character who has managed to transcend the binary. Left with no way to work his way out of the defiant character he constructs, he implies that her *performance* of femininity is a fiction, suggesting that what is real is, in fact, *femininity*. In the end of the novel, as Collins's narrator describes Mrs. Galilee's contentment in her freedom to pursue science yet remain dependent upon her son for economical stability, he appears to reinstate the power of patriarchy. Interestingly, and, by implication, he also realigns his former demon with the type of demonic woman who has traditionally defined villainous and/or transgressive females in sensation fiction. In other words, Collins's narrator in the end appears to equate his incomprehensible demon with the socially conceived illogical, absurd, and hysterical woman of Braddon's and Le Fanu's novels. Collins's narrator finds a way to remedy a construction gone awry as well as efficiently restore this woman back into the binary. In her essay "The Laugh of the Medusa," Helene Cixous contends that the only way for a female to transgress the male-female binary is to begin to recognize, own, and write from that hysterical place that patriarchy cannot contain within the so-called language of the father. In fact, Cixous argues that enacting the hysterical woman is a way to highlight the impossibility implicit in the binary that irrationality cannot be contained in a system that demands rational thought. However, Collins's narrator insists that, although his character looks as though she exits the dichotomy, she has in fact transgressed nothing at all.

The concluding scenes in *Heart and Science* invite a reexamination of the extent to which the narrators of *Uncle Silas* and *Lady Audley's Secret* also find their female villains uncontrollable. Do these narrators find ways to highlight the resilience of patriarchy, or do the characters become so uncontrollable that boundaries and culturally preconceived notions are threatened?

When reconsidering the strength of Le Fanu's narrator, Maud, one scene comes to mind - the day at Church Scarsdale. Prior to this scene, Maud has made no secret of wanting the reader to see Madame as villainous, demonic, strangely foreign, and grotesquely masculine, but at Church Scarsdale the reader sees Maud describe Madame as fiendish and witch-like as the governess dances among the gravestones. "And she uttered a horrid yell," Maud informs the reader, "she was laughing, and really looked quite mad"(42). With this narrative strategy, Maud wants assurance that the reader will see a demon, intensifying the already established fear of her oppressor and pity for herself. Yet, in an unforeseen twist Madame simultaneously presents herself as the fiend, appearing to fulfill what Maud wants us to see. Madame dances, sings odd chants in French, and waves a wig, thus highlighting techniques of a performance all the while intending to reveal to Maud that she *is* acting a role. Maud's descriptions of Madame have seemed stretched or exaggerated; however, when Maud takes her characterization to the next level and would have us see a crazed, insane, and even inhuman fiend, Madame goes along with it, never resisting or presenting a contrary image. If Maud is an unreliable narrator, as she openly admits, then her intention to force the reader to see the witch and thereby accentuate her own innocence and angelic nature backfires because Madame adopts and performs the persona, utilizing it to control and manipulate Maud through fear. Control of the narrative is lost because Madame proves she merely enacts a role. Since Madame's intentions are, for the greater part of the novel, unclear, Maud must continue to negate what Madame is proving about herself - that she is a performative subject. Maud recovers control throughout the rest of the narrative, however, making Madame into a ghost-like figure. Madame's likeness to the ghost does have subversive potential, however, due to a ghost's haunting behavior, which could function as a constant reminder of Madame's performances that Maud must narrate as intangible and illusive. Yet, Madame does disappear for the latter half of the novel only to return briefly as a subordinate to Uncle Silas and eventually die an accidental death. Despite Maud's narrative control at this point, the way Madame dies might be more subversive and revealing of Maud's failures in

containing the villain than first imagined. Upon her return, Madame takes on more of a victimized status, instead of actual enforcer. It is through the reader's understanding of Madame as Silas's victim that we can see through the "accidental" death and realize that it was no accident, but a clever scheme on the part of the narrator. In the end, we have two women existing under the oppression of Silas. Silas betrays Maud and underhandedly makes her a prisoner in his home while he plans her murder. Silas has also betrayed Madame; once his trusted counterpart and spy, Madame no longer has any authority and knows nothing about her employer's future plans for Maud or her own "cut" out of Maud's father's will. We never question Maud's survival, however, because we are always aware that she is the one telling the story many years later. The revelation that Madame dies in place of Maud due to a mix-up with the sleeping arrangements looks like an authorial construction that highlights the resilience and reinstatement of the angel over the incomprehensible performer. On the other hand, because Maud has often shown less than angelic tactics in how she contrives and exaggerates Madame's character, a conventional angel was not really saved, only someone who manipulated and construed information to make herself look like the ideal. Yes, Le Fanu's narrator succeeded in regaining control over the unruly and unthinkable villainous Madame, but, at the same time, highlighted her own deception and performances, thus calling into question whether or not Maud's character as well as Madame's worked collectively to deconstruct what is socially conceived as feminine nature. Moreover, because Maud fails at fulfilling the angelic role, which she professes and somewhat *performs* herself, she too reveals the flaws in the binary. In fact, Maud's character may show how the *narrator* actually went beyond the *author's* control.

I have purposefully waited to discuss Lady Audley last because her character is the most telling of an uncontrollable subject and subversive legacy. In revisiting *Lady Audley's Secret*, we should remember that the narrator begins by describing Lady Audley as angelic, while Lady Audley simultaneously professes that she is not an angel at all, and could never fulfill Sir Michael's desires for an angelic wife. Yet, as Lady Audley comes to fully realize the threat of

discovery from the oppressive and relentless Robert Audley, she begins to perform what the narrator has formerly assigned to her as an essential trait. Then, in an interesting shift, just when Lady Audley starts to fulfill what it seems as though the narrator wanted us to see in her from the beginning, the narrator begins insisting that Lady Audley is, in fact, not an angel, but demonic. Thus, the narrator equates Lady Audley's villainy with not only a performance of the angelic, but also the underlying demonic tendencies that are supposedly propelling her actions. It is logical that the narrator would resort to naming the demon as catalyst for Lady Audley's behavior. By doing so, the narrator can avoid the implications of role-play, particularly because her culture defines the role she plays as a natural phenomenon. Describing Lady Audley as demonic sufficiently keeps her in the angel- demon binary- - if she performs the angel then she must be inherently demonic. However, as the reader begins to realize that Lady Audley's actions look like sane and logical reactions to abandonment and threatening oppression, the narrator begins to describe Lady Audley as mad, which functions as the "secret" of the entire novel. At first, this madness might look like a conventional and logical explanation for the woman who has attempted murder, committed arson, lied, and committed bigamy. As with many female villains before her, it looks as though she meets with deserved consequences. Yet, it is at this point that the narrator ultimately loses control of Lady Audley because we must remember that we first learn about Lady Audley's madness from Lady Audley herself. But, Lady Audley's self-proclaimed insanity does enable the narrator to replace her back into the confines of a binary. As I have previously discussed, madness is a paradoxical characteristic that both defines "woman" as the opposite of male logic, but also makes her unrecognizable as the female ideal.

However, Lady Audley has performed the angel, a trait commonly considered inherently feminine. Additionally, we know that the narrator has constructed the demonic, thus neither angel nor demon ever applied to Braddon's character. Furthermore, madness could easily work as a performance because as the doctor affirms, no tangible evidence of madness comes to light.

Therefore, we see the narrator going along with the confession of madness because it has provided her with the best explanation for this inconceivable female.

The question remains as to whether or not the narrator really succeeds in convincing readers that Lady Audley acted in unconscious fits of insanity. I would argue that Lady Audley's choice to represent herself as mad parallels what Cixous suggests about authentic female transgression. If Lady Audley can perform-- and thereby utilize-- what society deems a natural cause for her actions, then she is showing her audience that she is outside any rationalized binary system. Therefore, Lady Audley stands on the outside of this order, not only suggesting that she is neither angel nor demon, but also showing that her madness and incomprehensibility *are* in fact the very characteristics that make up her essential nature as a form of what French feminists would term "pure difference." While the narrator attempts to tie up the novel in a neat, androcentric bow with the reunion between George and Robert, the marriage of Robert and his angelic Clara, and finally the death of Lady Audley, a resolution never really surfaces. Placing Lady Audley in a far away asylum only functions to intensify the foreignness of such a woman to logical, masculine reason. Lady Audley jeopardizes what is rational and conceivable because she seems to proclaim from her position outside of convention: "Yes, I am mad, I choose it, it is mine."

It has not been until after I explored these uncontrollable and quite subversive female villains that Mikhail Bakhtin's study of underlying dialogues and "novelistic languages" has become more relevant to my inquiry. In his essay, "Discourse in the Novel," Bakhtin discusses the many "voices" present in each text, which exceed simply a character and a narrator. In fact, what Bakhtin terms "dialogism" differs distinctly from just two characters speaking. As Bakhtin suggests, "The speaking person in the novel is always, to one degree or another, an ideologue, and his words are always ideologemes" (333). For Bakhtin, the character may or may not act in compliance with the author's wishes, but the key is that the character acts according to his/her own ideology or represents a larger, overarching social ideology through his/her discourse. In fact

there are many different voices that emerge in characters' dialogue, besides those who are overtly speaking. I would propose that many "voices" emerge in the texts I have examined. As Bakhtin argues, those voices reside in the author's use of "novelistic language," a language that cannot resist the cultural dialogues embedded in cultural discourse. In other words, there is a social conscience and preconceived set of ideologies and anxieties seeping not only into speech, but also into the characters' thoughts, assumptions of other characters, actions, and even the narrator's descriptions. In the novels I have discussed, these simultaneous voices are surfacing to reveal a cultural dialogue that expresses a preconceived set of ideologies and anxieties about female transgressions. The reader hears a voice that initiates consequences and punishes the deviant, thus upholding past treatment and handling of such women as well as demanding allegiance to an ordered system. Yet, there is even another voice, the one of the collective female "villains" themselves who suggest that even in their dying breaths, they have shed light on the ownership of their mad, hysterical, and incomprehensible position. Although their culture insists that they exist in the ordered confines of a dichotomy, these women offer the possibility that perhaps they do, in fact, occupy a place that is illogical, one that could never be contained by a rational world.

These texts and especially Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret* may serve as precursors for the on-going questioning of a woman's essentialism that continues throughout the latter part of the nineteenth century. Future research on New Woman novels could determine whether a tension exists between these later narratives itself and their characters' self-representations. Moreover, are these later authors struggling with the same binaries or are others such as virgin-whore more pertinent? How do later authors construct female transgressors? Finally, does the hint of female progression lurking in these novels surface again in New Woman fiction, and if so does the progression towards "pure difference" continue or suffer a setback? Have we created a purely feminine discourse that defies all male-ordered logic, or have we yet to fully recognize it?

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Vitae

Heather Sowards

Education

Ohio University

Address : Athens, OH

Degree: Working toward Ph.D in English

Attended: will begin 9/8/03

Expected Graduation date: 5/07

Marshall University

Address: 400 Hal Greer Blvd. Huntington, WV 25755

Degree: M.A. in English

G.P.A.: 4.0

Attended: 8/2001-present

Graduation Date: 8/14/2003

Concord College

Address: P.O. Box 1000 Athens, WV 24712

Degree: Bachelor's Degree in English/Literature

Additional Coursework: Minors in Philosophy and Psychology

Graduation Date: 5/2001

Attended: 8/1997-5/2001

Teaching Experience

1. Employer: Ohio University
Position: Teaching Assistant
Duties: will teach several different English courses, including upper level courses
Employed: will begin 9/8/03
2. Employer: Marshall University (English Department)
Position: Teaching Assistant
Duties: Taught 4 semesters of English 101 and English 102
Employed: 1/02- 5/03

Accomplishments

Successfully completed my Master's Thesis concerning Sensational Fiction of the Victorian Period.
I was also accepted into Ohio University's English Ph.D program

Achievements/Awards

1. English Student of the Year Award- Concord College 2001
2. Awarded membership into Alpha Chi (National Collegiate Honor Society)
3. Academic Achievement Scholarship- 8/97-5-01
4. Awarded membership into Cardinal Key Honor Society

5. Awarded membership into Concord College's Honors Program 1998-1999
6. Who's Who Among American Colleges and Universities 2000 and 2001
7. Advanced Placement Scholarship Award 1997-1998
8. Graduated Magna Cum Laude-Concord College
9. Awarded Teaching Assistantship at Marshall University 1/02-5/03

Conferences

Presented at the National 20th Century Literary Conference at the University of Louisville.
Paper Topic: Surveillance Society in Women's Autobiography